

“LET THE WEALTH OF THE NATIONS COME INTO YOU”
(ISA 60,11): ANCIENT ISRAEL’S DIALOGUE WITH
THE NEIGHBOURING CULTURES ¹

“Polemic” is a frequent word in biblical interpretation ². The prophets are often polemical, not only when dealing with their own people but also very much when addressing the neighbouring peoples. For instance we know the polemical position of the prophet Elijah was the same as that of the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah against the cult of the god Baal (1 Kings 17–18; Hos 2,10.15.18; Jer 2,8; 11,13; 12,16; 23,13.27; etc.). We know of various oracles against the nations, in particular against Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. In a more recent period, the deuterocanonical book of the Maccabees criticises the introduction of customs coming from Hellenistic culture (2 Macc 4,7-20). So, was Israel’s culture constructed “against”, in contraposition, in opposition to the neighbouring cultures? Did ancient Israel construct its own identity by creating a vacuum around itself, rejecting everything that was not unadulterated, that did not come directly from its own tradition or from a divine revelation? Did Israel develop in a vacuum, behind closed doors? The careful study of the texts and evidence available to us obliges us to add more than one nuance to this first impression. To take but one example, it is or was asserted that the great difference between the gods of the nations and the God of the Bible lies in the fact that the gods of the nations are divinities of nature, of the natural cycles,

¹ This is the text of a conference given at the Biblical Institute (Rome) on the 26th of May, 2021, to conclude my teaching in this Institute.

² To take some examples, see T. PULCINI, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse*. Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures (American Academy of Religion. The Religions 2; Atlanta, GA 1998); Y. AMIT, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative*. Translated from the Hebrew by Jonathan Chipman (Biblical Interpretation 25; Leiden 2000); M. LEUCHTER, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26–45* (Cambridge – New York 2008); S. ANTHONIOZ, “À qui me comparerez-vous?” (Is 40, 25). La polémique contre l’idolâtrie dans le Deutéro-Isaïe (Lectio Divina 241; Paris 2011); N. NA’AMAN, “A Hidden Anti-Samaritan Polemic in the Story of Abimelech and Shechem (Judges 9)”, *BZ* 55 (2011) 1-20; B. HENSEL, “The Chronicler’s Polemics towards the Samaritan YHWH-worshippers: A Fresh Approach”, *The Samaritans in Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives* (ed. J. DUŠEK) (Studia Samaritana 11; Berlin – Boston, MA 2018) 35-47; M. KARTVEIT, “Anti-Samaritan Polemics in the Hebrew Bible? The Case of 2 Kings 17,24-41”, *The Samaritans in Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives* (ed. Jan DUŠEK) (Studia Samaritana 11; Berlin – Boston, MA 2018) 3-18; M. MICHAEL, “Is Saul the Second Goliath of 1 Samuel? The Rhetoric & Polemics of the David/Goliath Story in 1 Samuel”, *SJOT* 34 (2020) 221-244.

whereas the God of the Bible is a God who intervenes directly in history ³. However, a more careful reading of the texts of the Ancient Near East, in particular of the Mesopotamian texts, reveals a different picture. The gods of the nations did intervene duly in history, for example, to guide, support, and help their clients ⁴.

There are a good many other elements of this type, and, in this brief essay, it is my intention to show how much the biblical world owes to the neighbouring cultures. The biblical culture of ancient Israel was born, grew up and matured in constant dialogue with the neighbouring cultures. We must not forget that ancient Israel found itself in an area where there was constant traffic on the Way of the Sea which joined ancient Egypt to Phoenicia, Syria and Mesopotamia ⁵. It was a place of journeys and interchange. We should not wonder if we find traces of these interchanges in the Bible itself. I would like to demonstrate this, starting from some concrete examples. I shall be dealing with the worlds of Canaan, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece. The panorama is vast, and, therefore, I shall be confining myself to some of the more interesting aspects.

To put it briefly, it seems to me more reasonable to think that Israel borrowed many elements from the cultures of its environment. It adopted, adapted, modified, transformed and integrated essential parts of these cultures which were more developed and more prestigious than its own. It also wanted to show that it could offer similar elements. At one and the same time, it was a matter of emulation, imitation and assimilation.

I. THE WORLD OF CANAAN

“Canaan” is a rather vague concept which is used, generally, to designate the peoples who, according to the book of Joshua, occupied the Promised Land before the arrival of the people of Israel ⁶. However, in some texts, it can also refer to the Phoenicians who, themselves, were called

³ See, for example, G.E. WRIGHT, *God Who Acts*. Biblical Theology as Recital (Studies in Biblical Theology 8; London 1954); G.E. WRIGHT – R.H. FULLER, *The Book of the Acts of God*. Christian Scholarship Interprets the Bible (London 1960).

⁴ B. ALBREKTSON, *History and the Gods*. An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel (CBOT 1; Gleerup 1967).

⁵ See, for example, B.J. BEITZEL, “The Via Maris in Literary and Cartographic Sources”, *Biblical Archaeologist* 54 (1991) 64-75.

⁶ On the Canaanites, see, for example, K.L. NOLL, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity*. A Textbook on History and Religion (London 2013); J. BAKER, “Archaeology and the Canaanites”, *The Old Testament in Archaeology and History* (eds. J. EBELING – J.E. WRIGHT – M. ELLIOTT et al.) (Waco, TX 2017). As for Ugarit, which we cannot treat fully in this article, see, for instance, M.S. SMITH, “Ugaritic and Biblical Literature”, *Oxford Research*

Canaanites in some ancient documents ⁷. St Augustine, for example, called the Carthaginians “Canaanites” ⁸. Their reputation was not very positive. Everyone remembers that Canaan, their ancestor, was cursed by Noah in Gen 9,25: “Cursed be Canaan! May he be the slave of slaves of his brothers!” The late text of Lev 18,3 counsels against the adoption of Canaanite customs: “You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you dwelt nor that which is done in the land of Canaan whither I am bringing you and you shall not follow their customs”. Elsewhere, a text like Isa 19,18 speaks of Hebrew as the “language of Canaan”: “In that day, in the land of Egypt, there will be five cities which speak the language of Canaan and which swear by the LORD of hosts; one of them will be called: City of the Sun”.

The picture of Canaan, therefore, is not completely negative. A discovery made about fifty years ago enables us to complete the picture. I mean the discoveries of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, a site situated in the Negeb, more or less a halfway house between the Mediterranean coast and the Gulf of Aqaba, which was excavated in the years 1975-1976 ⁹. Among the discoveries found in the main building are two large jars with paintings and inscriptions. The inscriptions are not easy to read; nor are they easy to interpret. In any case, two expressions can be read clearly which, as can easily be imagined, created great excitement and have been the subject of lively debates. They are as follows: “[...] I bless you on the part of YHWH of Samaria and his Ašerah”; and “I bless you on the part of YHWH of Teman and his Ašerah” ¹⁰. May he bless you and protect you and be with

Encyclopedias — <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.90> — published online: 02 March 2015.

⁷ In the Bible, see Judg 1,32; Isa 23,8.11; Ezek 17,4; Obadiah 20. For the Phoenicians, see C. BONNET, *I Fenici* (Parma 2004); J. ELAYI, *Histoire de la Phénicie* (Paris 2013) = *The History of Phoenicia* (trans. A. PLUMMER) (Atlanta, GA 2018).

⁸ *Expositio epistolae ad Romanos*, 13.

⁹ There are many publications on Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. See, among the latest studies, C. UEHLINGER, “Learning by Doing: Distinguishing Different Hands at Work in the Drawings and Paintings of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud”, *Alphabets, Texts and Artifacts in the Ancient Near East*. Studies Presented to B. Sass (eds. I. FINKELSTEIN – C. ROBIN – T. RÖMER) (Paris 2016) 489-511; E. BLUM, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud 4.1: New Reconstructions and Readings”, *Eretz Israel*. Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies (Ada Yardeni Volume) 34 (2021) 10*-20* (with recent bibliography, 19*-20*). Another similar discovery was made at another site, Khirbet el-Qôm, in the territory of Judah between Lachish and Hebron. The inscription goes back to the 8th century B.C.E. but is, perhaps, a little later than that of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. The text and its significance are debated. See, for example, É. PUECH, “L’inscription 3 de Khirbet el-Qôm revisitée et l’asherah”, *RB* 122 (2015) 5-25.

¹⁰ On the significance of the role of the female divinity, Asherah, see especially P. MERLO, “L’Ašerah di Yhwh a Kuntillet Ajrud. Rassegna critica degli studi e delle interpretazioni”, *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente Antico* 11 (1994) 1-35; IDEM, “Asherah”, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (EBR)* 2 (Berlin – New York 2009)

my lord [...]”. One immediately understands the question that arises on reading this text with all the uncertainties of the translation: Did YHWH, the God of Israel, have a consort, a throne partner? The opposition has been powerful and numerous. In any case, as one specialist has said, if we had read “Baal and his Ašerah”, the text would not have caused any difficulty ¹¹. This is neither the time nor place to settle the question. I would just like to underline three things.

First of all, the existence of the epigraphical material of Kuntilet ‘Ajrud obliges us to fill out the hitherto unilateral picture which originates, for example, from texts such as 1 Kings 18 and 19, where the prophet, Elijah, seems to be the only one worshipping YHWH, the God of Israel, or 2 Kings 9–10, where, after a *coup d’état*, Jehu suppresses the cult of Baal in order to reintroduce the cult of YHWH. Moreover, the polemic of Hosea 2 could lead to the thought that Baal had replaced YHWH completely ¹². Actually, this is not the case. The texts of Kuntilet ‘Ajrud are probably later than Hosea, but we see that YHWH was worshipped in Samaria.

A second point appears to me of great importance. If, with many serious scholars, we accept the reading, “YHWH of Samaria” or “YHWH of Teman with his Ašerah”, this means that, in the religion of Israel of that period, YHWH, the God of Israel, had a consort, a throne partner, like so many other deities of the Ancient Near East. This could be surprising. However, some biblical texts confirm the fact that there was an Asherah in the temple of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 15,13; 2 Kgs 18,4; 21,7; 23,4-6) until Josiah’s Reform (2 Kgs 23,4-6) ¹³. Very probably, it was part of the cult of YHWH.

Furthermore, recent archaeological studies have led to the thought that there was a certain discrepancy between the religion of Israel described

975-980 (with bibliography). See also S.M. OLYAN, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (SBL Monograph Series 34; Atlanta, GA 1988); O. KEEL – C. UEHLINGER, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole. Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (Quaestiones Disputatae 134; Freiburg 1992) = *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN 1998); J.M. HADLEY, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah. Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 57; Cambridge – New York 2000); B. BECKING – M. DIJKSTRA et al., *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (The Biblical Seminar 77; Sheffield 2001); R. THOMAS, “The Meaning of Asherah in Hebrew Inscriptions”, *Semitica* 59 (2017) 157-218; R. EICHLER, “The Priestly Asherah”, *VT* 69 (2019) 33-45; P. STEIN, “Gottesname und Genitivattribut? ‘Yahwe und seine Aschera’ aus altsüdarabischer Perspektive”, *ZAW* 131 (2019) 1-27.

¹¹ D.N. FREEDMAN, “Yahweh of Samaria and His Asherah”, *BA* 50 (1987) 241-248, here 247.

¹² On the connections between YHWH and Baal, see the significant title of J.S. ANDERSON, *Monotheism and Yahweh’s Appropriation of Baal* (LHBOTS 617; London 2015).

¹³ MERLO, “Asherah”, 977-978.

in the biblical texts and the actual religion of the people of Israel ¹⁴. The religion described in the biblical texts is a religion that has been “revised and corrected” to correspond to very exact norms. The reality could have been different. The prophets’ polemics, Hosea, Jeremiah or Ezekiel, for instance, would not have made much sense unless they had some foundation in reality. Elsewhere, as we have seen, the religion against which the prophets struggled was probably a form of syncretism rather than a choice between the cult of one divinity to the exclusion of another. The texts of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, I repeat, speak of “YHWH and his Ašerah”, not of “Baal and his Ašerah”. Ašerah, as we know, is a well-known female divinity in the pantheon of Ugarit and of the Canaanite and Phoenician religion.

Finally, and this is the most important point, we do not find any explicit traces of a consort of YHWH in the biblical texts ¹⁵. The God of Israel is an “only Lord”, as it says, for example, in the prayer of Deut 6,4. However, the image found in Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, as in other evidence of the same type, has not been completely banished from the biblical texts. On the contrary, YHWH has a consort, but this consort is the people of Israel, as stated, for example, in the well-known passages of Hosea 2, Jeremiah 2 or Ezekiel 16. Asherah has been challenged, but she has also been replaced by the people of Israel as YHWH’s consort. The image of marriage, with all that that implies, has been taken up, modified and applied to the situation of the people before its God. It is not easy to describe a direct link between the one and the other. However, it is compelling to observe that the images of marriage, of fertility and fecundity, images dear to the texts and myths of the Baal cycle at Ugarit, are found again, in another form, in the prophetic texts. The prophets of Israel fight against certain forms of the popular cult, but they also appropriate essential elements for transmitting their message in an engaging and convincing way ¹⁶.

¹⁴ See, among others, M.S. SMITH, *God in Translation*. Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World (FAT 57; Tübingen 2008; Grand Rapids, MI 2010); F. STAVRAKOPOULOU – J. BARTON (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (London – New York 2010).

¹⁵ On this problem, see especially W.G. DEVER, *Did God Have a Wife?* Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel (Grand Rapids, MI 2005).

¹⁶ On this theme, see L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, “Simboli matrimoniali nell’Antico Testamento”, in *L’antropologia biblica* (ed. G. DE GENNARO) (Napoli 1981) 365-387; IDEM, *Simbolos matrimoniales en la Biblia* (Estella [Navarra] 1997) = *I nomi dell’amore*. Simboli matrimoniali nella Bibbia. Translation from the Spanish edition by M. ZAPPELLA (Casale Monferrato, AL 1997). There are numerous publications on Hosea 2. In addition to the commentaries, see B.E. KELLE, *Hosea 2*. Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective (Society of Biblical Literature. Academia Biblica 20; Atlanta, GA 2005).

II. THE EGYPTIAN CULTURE

In the Old Testament, there are two contrasting ways of presenting Egypt¹⁷. On the one hand, it is the country that welcomes Abraham and Joseph during times of famine, and it was to continue to welcome various refugees, for example, the prophet, Jeremiah, and his companions (Jeremiah 42–43). On the other hand, there is also the Egypt of the book of Exodus, synonymous with oppression and despotism, an Egypt which immediately evokes the images of an unbearable slavery. This negative image is confirmed by various prophetic oracles against Egypt. The biblical Egypt is an ambivalent entity, to say the least.

However, the biblical world does not seem to have borrowed much from the Egyptian culture, at least directly¹⁸. Generally, texts such as Psalm 104 are cited. It contains various *motifs* present in a hymn to the Egyptian god, Aton¹⁹; also Prov 22,17 – 24,22 which is very close to the Egyptian text of the *Instruction of Amenemope*²⁰; as well as the oracle of Isaiah 19 which, apparently, draws *motifs* from an Egyptian text known from a document of the Hellenistic period, the “oracle of the *vassoio*”. We also find similar *motifs* in Ezekiel’s oracles against Egypt (Ezekiel 29–32)²¹.

There are other elements, and I shall cite at least one of them which we shall find again when we speak of Egypt in the Hellenistic period. No one will deny that there is a sapiential current of a certain importance in

¹⁷ See, among very many other studies, J. MODRZEJEWSKI, *The Jews of Egypt*. From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian (Edinburgh 1995); C.A. REDMOUNT, “Egypt”, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (ed. M.D. COOGAN) (Oxford 1998) 58–89; F.V. GREIFENHAGEN, *Egypt on the Pentateuch’s Ideological Map*. Constructing Biblical Israel’s Identity (JSOTSS 361; London 2002); S.C. RUSSELL, *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature*. Cisjordan-Israelite, Transjordan-Israelite, and Judahite Portrayals (BZAW 403; Berlin – New York 2008).

¹⁸ See B.U. SCHIPPER, “Egyptian Influences on the Biblical Text”, n.p. [cited 18 May 2021]. Online: <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/443/places/related-articles/egyptian-influences-on-the-biblical-text> (consulted 18-05-2021).

¹⁹ For a recent study, see S. ANTHONIOZ, “Le Psaume 104: témoin des aléas de la transmission d’un savoir à Jérusalem dans l’Antiquité”, *Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, 2021 (with bibliography). Site: <https://books.openedition.org/cths/14752?lang=it> (consulted 13.06.2021). See also T. KRÜGER, “‘Kosmo-theologie’ zwischen Mythos und Erfahrung: Psalm 104 im Horizont altorientalischer und alttestamentlicher ‘Schöpfungskonzepte’”, *Biblische Notizen* 68 (1993) 49–74 = *Kritische Weisheit*. Studien zur weisheitlichen Traditionskritik im Alten Testament (Zürich 1997) 91–120.

²⁰ See the seminal work of W.O.E. OESTERLEY, *The Wisdom of Egypt & the Old Testament in the Light of the Newly Discovered “Teaching of Amen-em-ope”* (London 1927). The commentaries mention the fact.

²¹ On this text, see N. SHUPAK, “The Egyptian ‘Prophecy’ — A Reconsideration”, *Von reichlich ägyptischem Verstande*. Festschrift für Waltraud Guglielmi (eds. K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN – H.W. FISCHER-ELFERT) (Philippika – Marburger Altertumskundliche Abhandlungen 11; Wiesbaden 2006) 133–144.

the biblical world. Wisdom is personified and celebrated with lyrical terms in Proverbs 8, Sirach 24 and Wis 7,22 – 8,16. In Egypt, Wisdom is personified as a goddess, Ma’at, who is, at the same time, goddess of, among other things, truth, wisdom, justice and the cosmic order. She has also an important role in the search for immortality symbolised by the plumage which she bears on her head. Once arrived in the world of the dead, the heart of the dead person was weighed on a balance held by the god, Anubis, and if it was heavier than the weight of Ma’at’s plumage, they could not enter the afterlife. The themes of wisdom and immortality are also present in the first part of the book of Wisdom ²².

Another aspect of the goddess, Ma’at, could be very significant. In fact, and this has been studied carefully by the Swiss exegete, Othmar Keel, there is an interesting parallelism between a role of the goddess, Ma’at, and the personification of Wisdom in Prov 8,30-31 ²³. There are undeniable features common to the two figures. However, it is not simple to trace the possible link between the two representations. The common features have to do with a similar way of conceiving creation. In the Egyptian world, the goddess, Ma’at, evokes the idea of wisdom but also of morality, law, equilibrium, order and justice, all qualities necessary for combatting chaos and living happily in this world. Now, every morning, the goddess, Ma’at, presents herself before the creator god, Khnum, and dances before him. After having contemplated this dance, with a cheerful heart, the creator god sets to work and looks after the universe. That signifies that the work of creation is inspired by pleasure, cheerfulness, the freedom of art, music and dance. According to Othmar Keel, the same image is found in the somewhat enigmatic text of Prov 8,30-32:

<p>וַאֲהִיָּה אֶצְלוֹ אִמּוֹן וַאֲהִיָּה שַׁעֲשָׁעִים יוֹם יוֹם מִשְׁחָקָתָ לִפְנֵיו בְּכָל-עֵת</p> <p>מִשְׁחָקָתָ בְּתֵבֶל אֶרְצוֹ וְשַׁעֲשָׁעִי אֶת-בְּנֵי אָדָם</p> <p>וְעַתָּה בָּנִים שְׁמַעוּ-לִי וְאֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁמְרוּ</p>
<p>³⁰ I was beside him like a craftsman; I was always exuberant with joy day after day, <i>I was dancing</i> all the time in his presence;</p> <p>³¹ <i>I danced</i> in the habitable part of his land, I found my joy among the sons of men.</p> <p>³² Now, my sons, listen to me; blessed are those who observe my ways!</p>

²² See M. KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom (1–6)*. A Study of Literary Structure and Interpretation (AnBib 127; Rome 1991); IDEM, “Universalism and Justice in the Wisdom of Solomon”, *Treasures of Wisdom*. Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom. Festschrift M. Gilbert (eds. N. CALDUCH-BENAGES – J. VERMEYLEN) (Leuven 1999) 289-301.

²³ O. KEEL, *Die Weisheit spielt vor Gott*. Ein ikonographischer Beitrag zur Deutung des *mesahqāt* in Spr 8,30 f. (Freiburg 1974).

According to our author, the parallelism is clear, with some differences. Wisdom is personified, she is the first creature, but she is not divinised. At any rate, Wisdom “dances” before God, the creator God of the universe or, according to other translations “she rejoices” (RSV) or “played” (NAB/NJB), “delighting myself” (CEI 1978) or “rejoicing in his presence” (Paoline). Anyway, also according to Proverbs 8, the work of creation does not arise from a necessity, as, for example, in Mesopotamia, in the myth of Atra-Hasis, but from the freedom of dance or of play, and from joy bound up with art ²⁴. Othmar Keel knows the iconography of the Ancient Near East very well and his demonstration has its weight. Thus, we would have another case of parallelism between the Egyptian world and the book of Proverbs. Here again, ancient Israel takes up the image, assimilating and adapting it to its new context ²⁵.

III. THE MESOPOTAMIAN CULTURE AND ITS DECISIVE INFLUENCE

According to an Assyrian document, the Kurkh Stela, an important battle took place in 853 B.C.E. at Qarqar in western Syria between an Assyrian army led by Shalmaneser III against a coalition made up of twelve sovereigns of the region who were opposed to the Assyrian advance towards the Mediterranean. The result of this battle was uncertain; more important than the victory was the impact this battle had on the history of the region. First of all, the battle of Qarqar, which can be dated with precision thanks to Assyrian documents, became the hub, or at least one of the nodal points, for the whole of biblical chronology ²⁶. The Kurkh Stela marks the first serious contact between Assyria and Israel because one of the contingents of the coalition was led by King Ahab of Israel, well known for his tempestuous relations with the prophet, Elijah (1 Kings 17–19) ²⁷.

²⁴ See also the short work of H. RAHNER, *Der spielende Mensch* (Einsiedeln 1952, 10²⁰⁰⁸).

²⁵ We could also speak of the royal ideology. In Egypt, just as in some texts of the Old Testament, the sovereign is “son of God” or “generated by God” (Pss 2,7; 89,27; 110,3^{LXX}; 2 Sam 7,14). Cf. A. YARBRO COLLINS – J.J. COLLINS, *King and Messiah as Son of God*. Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature (Grand Rapids, MI 2008).

²⁶ See J. READE, *Mesopotamian Guidelines for Biblical Chronology* (Monographic Journals of the Near East. Syro-Mesopotamian Studies 4.1; Malibu, CA 1981); J. FINEGAN, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*. Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible (Peabody, MA 2¹⁹⁹⁸); A. LAATO, *Guide to Biblical Chronology* (Sheffield 2015).

²⁷ See B. KELLE, “What’s in a Name? Neo-Assyrian Designations for the Northern Kingdom and Their Implications for Israelite History and Biblical Interpretation”, *JBL* 121

1. *The Accounts of the Creation and the Flood* ²⁸

It is not easy to summarise the influence of Mesopotamia on the biblical world. It is necessary to signal some of the better-known areas such as the accounts of Genesis 1–11, particularly the first Creation narrative (Gen 1,1 – 2,3) and the story of the Flood (Genesis 6–9). Dominique Barthélemy used to say that it is always very difficult to find the original version of the biblical texts, especially of the Masoretic Text. With regard to the account of the Flood, he said that the original version is probably to be found in Mesopotamia ²⁹.

2. *The Collections of Laws* ³⁰

Another very important field is that of the laws. It would be possible to say that without Mesopotamia and its collections of laws we would not have any written law in the Bible. The *torah* and the written *torah* arose — in all probability — as a way of proving that Israel too possessed its own law just like Mesopotamia. Otherwise, the customary law would have been sufficient, or the administration of justice at the gates of the city by the royal officials ³¹. There is an immense bibliography on the

(2002) 639–646. See also N. NA‘AMAN, “Was Ahab Killed by an Assyrian Arrow in the Battle of Qarqar?”, *UF* 37 (2005) 461–474. In fact, according to some chronologies, Ahab would have died in the year of the battle of Qarqar. Elsewhere, the biblical account of 2 Kings 22 stages a battle between Ahab and the Aramaeans who were his allies in the battle of Qarqar.

²⁸ There are numerous studies. See, among others, W.G. LAMBERT – A.R. MILLARD – M. CIVIL, *Ara-Hasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood — With the “Sumerian Flood Story”* (Oxford – London 1969); O. KEEL – S. SCHROER, *Schöpfung. Biblische Theologien im Kontext altorientalischer Religionen* (Göttingen 2002, ²2008) = *Creation. Biblical Theology in the Context of Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (trans. P.T. DANIELS) (Winona Lake, IN ²2015); H.S. KVANVIG, *Primeval History — Babylonian, Biblical, and Enochic. An Intertextual Reading* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 149; Leiden – Boston, MA 2011); S. RAMOND – R. ACHENBACH (eds.), *Aux commencements — création et temporalité dans la Bible et dans son contexte culturel* = *Collected Essays on Creation and Temporality in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Texts* (BZAR 24; Wiesbaden 2019). See also W.G. LAMBERT, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 16; Winona Lake, IN 2013).

²⁹ Oral communication.

³⁰ The bibliography is immense. See, among others, E. OTTO, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart 1994); R. WESTBROOK (ed.), *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law I-II* (Handbook of Oriental Studies. I. The Near and Middle East 78.1-2; Leiden 2003). On relations between Assyria and Israel, see, for example, E. OTTO, *Das Deuteronomium. Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* (BZAW 284; Berlin – New York 1999). For the texts, see M.T. ROTH, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. With a contribution by H.A. HOFFNER, Jr. (Volume editor: P. MICHALOWSKI) (Writings from the Ancient World 6; Atlanta, GA 1995, 1997).

³¹ See the classic study of H.J. BOECKER, *Recht und Gesetz im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient* (Studienbücher 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1976, ²1984) = *Law and the Administration*

subject³². However, it is worth the trouble to emphasise that the first part of the so-called covenant code, Exod 21,1 – 22,16, contains numerous parallels with the Mesopotamian laws, in particular with the famous code of Hammurabi³³. It might be worth assessing the idea that this part of the covenant code arose in the Northern Kingdom, much more developed than its counterpart in the South, and in close contact with Assyria because, starting from the reign of Jehu (841-814 B.C.E.) and for more than a century, the Northern Kingdom was a vassal of Assyria³⁴. This is attested by the only representation of a king of Israel that we know of, which shows, very probably, King Jehu prostrate before King Shalmaneser III, the king of the battle of Qarqar. Jehu prostrates himself before King Shalmaneser while paying the tribute of a vassal. This is the famous black obelisk preserved in the British Museum³⁵.

3. Covenant with “the Great King” of Assyria or with the God of Israel

A third essential field is that of the theology of the covenant, another field that has been much studied with never-ending discussions on its origin and significance³⁶. In a few words, the diplomacy of the neo-Assyrian

of Justice in the Old Testament and Ancient East (Minneapolis, MN 1980). See also H. NIEHR, *Rechtsprechung in Israel*. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Gerichtsorganisation im Alten Testament (SBS 130; Stuttgart 1987). For more recent studies, see W.S. MORROW, *An Introduction to Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids, MI 2017) with bibliography.

³² See, for example, J.W. WELCH, *A Biblical Law Bibliography*. Sorted by Subjects and by Authors (Provo, UT 1989; Lewiston, NY 1990); S.C. RUSSELL, “Biblical Law in the Hebrew Bible”, *Oxford Bibliographies* (2016) – site: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0228.xml>; P. BARMASH (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law* (Oxford 2019).

³³ See, in particular, the influential study of S.M. PAUL, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law* (VTS 18; Leiden 1970).

³⁴ On the history of the Northern Kingdom, see in particular I. FINKELSTEIN, *The Forgotten Kingdom*. The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel (Ancient Near East Monographs 5; Atlanta, GA 2013) = *Il regno dimenticato*. Israele e le origini nascoste della Bibbia (Roma 2014).

³⁵ See, for example, C.C. SMITH, “Jehu and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III”, *Scripture in History & Theology*. Essays in Honor of J.C. Rylaarsdam (eds. A.M. MERRIL – T.W. OVERHOLD) (Pittsburgh, PA 1977) 71-105; J.K. KUAN, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions and Syria-Palestine*. Israelite/Judean-Tyrian-Damascene Political and Commercial Relations in the Ninth-Eighth Centuries BCE (Eugene, OR 2016) 64-66.

³⁶ See, for example, the recent study of C.L. CROUCH – J.M. HUTTON, *Translating Empire*. Tell Fekheriyeh, Deuteronomy, and the Akkadian Treaty Tradition (FAT 135; Tübingen 2019). For older studies, see D.J. MCCARTHY, *Old Testament Covenant*. A Survey of Current Opinions (Growing Points in Theology; Oxford 1972); IDEM, *Treaty and Covenant*. A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament (AnBib 21A; Rome 1979). See also R.D. MILLER II, *Covenant and Grace in the Old Testament*. Assyrian Propaganda and Israelite Faith (Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts; Piscataway, NJ 2012); R.J. BAUTCH – G.N. KNOPPERS (eds.), *Covenant in the Persian*

Empire was based on its two pillars: the strength of its army and the vassal treaties, the army being, obviously, the persuasive power or deterrent which invited subject peoples to respect the vassal treaties imposed on the states that had been subdued by love or force. There are undeniable links between the book of Deuteronomy and a well-known treaty of vassalage or succession, the so-called vassal treaty of Esarhaddon, son of Sennacherib and father of Assurbanipal, a treaty that was precisely in favour of a son who was not his firstborn ³⁷. It goes back to 672 B.C.E. when the king in Jerusalem was the notorious Manasseh (687-642), who paid tribute to the king of Assyria. Two important copies of the treaty have been found, one at Nimrud, in Mesopotamia, with the vassals of the eastern part of the kingdom, and the other at Tell Tayinat, in southern Turkey, not far from the frontier with Syria, on the Mediterranean coast, which lists western vassals of the Assyrian kingdom ³⁸. The copies were kept in the most sacred part of the temple and were meant to be exhibited, not archived. We can suppose that further copies of the treaty existed in various parts of the empire, and, probably, in Jerusalem. This would be a good explanation for the almost literal contacts between the treaty and Deuteronomy 13, the duty to denounce anyone not respecting the treaty, and some of the curses of Deuteronomy 28 ³⁹.

More important for our purpose is the way in which Israel once again appropriated a language that was very widespread in this period to reformulate its own identity and its own cultural and religious tradition. Briefly, Deuteronomy takes up the idea of covenant, the basis of the political life

Period. From Genesis to Chronicles (Winona Lake, IN 2015); J.J. KRAUSE, *Die Bedingungen des Bundes*. Studien zur konditionalen Struktur alttestamentlicher Bundeskonzeptionen (FAT 140; Tübingen 2020).

³⁷ For the first edition of the text, see D.J. WISEMAN, “The Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon”, *Iraq* 20 (1958) 1-99, Pl. 1-53, I-XII (spec. 59-80, 414-493) = *The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* (London 1958) = E. REINER (ed.), “The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon”, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Ancient Testament* (ed. J.B. PRITCHARD) (Princeton, NJ ³1969) 534-541. See also the classic edition of S. PARPOLA – K. WATANABE, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (State Archives of Assyria 2; Helsinki 1988) 28-58.

³⁸ J. LAUNGER, “Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Tablet Collection in Building XVI from Tell Tayinat”, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 6 (2011) 5-14; IDEM, “Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary”, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 64 (2012) 87-123.

³⁹ For the comparison between Esarhaddon’s treaty and Deuteronomy, see, especially, H.U. STEYMANS, *Deuteronomium 28 und die adê zur Thronfolgeregelung Esarhaddons*. Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel (OBO 145; Freiburg Schweiz – Göttingen 1995); IDEM, “Deuteronomy 28 and Tell Tayinat”, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34 (2013) 1-13. See also, among other contributors, J.M. HUTTON – C.L. CROUCH, “Deuteronomy as a Translation of Assyrian Treaties”, *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 7 (2018) 201-252 (with bibliography).

at this time, and reinterprets it as the foundation of its relationship with its God. The nations can be vassals of a king, for example, the king of Assyria. Israel, instead, is vassal of its God, and only of its God, and, therefore, of no power of this world. The idea and, in large measure, the vocabulary come from the neo-Assyrian kingdom, but the tune is very different. Deuteronomy is singing a hymn to the only God of Israel. In this reflection on and reuse of the language of the covenant, we can see one of the origins of monotheism: Israel can have only a single sovereign and so only one God, just as vassals can serve and honour only one sovereign ⁴⁰.

4. *Biblical Prophetism and Mesopotamian Prophetism* ⁴¹

I shall set aside all the debates over the northern or southern origin of Deuteronomy to mention in passing the phenomenon of prophetism, which was well known in Mesopotamia just as it was in Israel in both kingdoms, North and South. There is a huge bibliography for this with all the necessary details, and so I shall not linger on the subject. I shall mention only that some expressions characteristic of the prophetic language are found in the prophetic texts of Mesopotamia ⁴². As in the other cases, although the tunes can be very much alike, the tonality in Israel is quite distinct ⁴³.

5. *The Worlds of the Scribes and of Writing* ⁴⁴

I shall now tackle another essential element of the Mesopotamian culture which had a considerable influence on the biblical world. I am thinking

⁴⁰ See, for example, M. WEINFELD, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford 1972 – Winona Lake, IN 1992); G. BRAULIK, “Das Deuteronomium und die Geburt des Monotheismus”, *Gott, der einzige*. Zur Entstehung des Monotheismus in Israel (ed. E. HAAG) (Quaestiones Disputatae 104; Freiburg i. B. 1985) 115-159; N. MACDONALD, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of “Monotheism”* (FAT 2.1; Tübingen 2003); S. PETRY, *Die Entgrenzung JHWHs. Monolatrie, Bilderverbot und Monotheismus im Deuteronomium, in Deuteronomesaja und im Ezechielbuch* (FAT 2.27; Tübingen 2007).

⁴¹ See, first of all, M. NISSINEN (ed.), *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context. Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (SBL Symposium Series 13; Atlanta, GA 2000); M. NISSINEN, *Prophecy in Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW 494; Berlin – Boston, MA 2017); IDEM, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World 12; Atlanta, GA 2003; Writings of the Ancient World 41; Atlanta, GA 2019).

⁴² See, for example, J. STÖKL, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East. A Philological and Sociological Comparison* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 56; Leiden – Boston, MA 2012).

⁴³ On prophetism, see, for example, C.J. SHARP (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets* (New York 2016).

⁴⁴ On this subject, see especially S. NIDITCH, *Oral World and Written Word. Ancient Israelite Literature* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville, KY 1996); D.M. CARR, *Writing on the*

of the world of the scribes and of writing. An important institution in Mesopotamia was the scribal school or *edubba*, “house of the tablets” in Sumerian ⁴⁵. I am speaking of Mesopotamia rather than Egypt, where the scribes were also an essential element of the administration, because there took place in Mesopotamia a notable phenomenon that had a decisive influence on biblical literature, that is, the passage to the Aramaic alphabet and the Aramaic language. This event is attested by a bas relief at Nimrud, dating between 880 and 850 B.C.E. In Israel, we are in the period of Omri (876-869) and Ahab (869-853) in the Northern Kingdom and of Asa (913-873) and of Jehoshaphat (870-846) in the southern Kingdom ⁴⁶. Aramaic imposed itself as the “lingua franca” in the Ancient Middle East, starting from the conquest of the Aramaean kingdom by Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.E.) ⁴⁷. The conqueror adopted the language of the conquered for reasons that are not very clear. The language and writing of Aramaic were simpler than Akkadian and were used by more peoples. The bas relief of Nimrud, however, preceded the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III by more than a century, which means that the passage from one language to the other had begun earlier.

At any rate, Aramaic later became the *lingua franca* under the Babylonians and in the whole of the western part of the Persian Empire. For example, according to 2 Kgs 18,26, King Hezekiah conducted the negotiations with

Tablet of the Heart. Origins of Scripture and Literature (Oxford 2005); W.M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book. The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge 2004) = *Come la Bibbia divenne un libro. La testualizzazione dell'antico Israele* (Brescia 2008); L.D. MORENZ – S. SCHORCH (Hrsg.), *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, ägyptologische und altorientalistische Perspektiven* (BZAW 362; Berlin – New York 2007); A. WEISSENRIEDER – R.B. COOTE (eds.), *The Interface of Orality and Writing. Speaking, Seeing, Writing in the Shaping of New Genres* (WUNT 260; Tübingen 2010); C.A. ROLLSTON, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel. Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (SBL Archaeology and Biblical Studies 9; Atlanta, GA 2010); P. DUBOVSKÝ – F. GIUNTOLI (eds.), *Stones, Tablets, and Scrolls. Periods of the Formation of the Bible* (Archaeology and Bible 3; Tübingen 2020); C.A. EVANS – J.J. JOHNSTON (eds.), *Scribes and Their Remains* (Library of Second Temple Studies 94 – T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies – Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 21; London – New York 2020).

⁴⁵ On the *edubba*, see H.L.J. VANSTIPHOUT, “On the Old Babylonian Eduba Curriculum”, *Centres of Learning. Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (eds. J.W. DRIVERS – A.A. MACDONALD) (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 61; Leiden – Boston, MA 1995) 3-16; D. CHARPIN, *Lire et écrire à Babylone* (Paris 2008) = *Reading and Writing in Babylon* (trans. J.M. TODD) (Cambridge, MA 2010).

⁴⁶ Bas relief of Nimrud — between 880 and 850 B.C.E., with a description of the booty of war after a battle. British Museum (London). Cf. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Relief-carving-from-the-central-palace-at-Nimrud-showing-two-Assyrian-scribes-ca-728_fig2_269661782.

⁴⁷ On Aramaic, see, for example, M. SOKOLOFF (ed.), *Arameans, Aramaic and the Aramaic Literary Tradition* (Bar-Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture; Ramat-Gan 1983).

Sennacherib's envoys, in 701 B.C.E., in Aramaic in order to avoid being understood by the population of Jerusalem, which only spoke Hebrew:

<p>²⁶ ויאמר אליקים בן־חלקיהו ושבנה ויואח אל־רב־שקה דבר־נא אל־עבדיך ארמית כי שמעים אנחנו ואל־תדבר עמנו יהודית באזני העם אשר על־החמה</p>
<p>²⁶ Then Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, Shebna and Ioah said to the Rabshakeh: "I pray you, speak to your servants in <i>Aramaic</i>, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the <i>language of Judah</i> since the people standing on the walls are listening".</p>

I think that there is another important element in this context. It is the increasing importance of writing in the biblical world and, very probably, in part as a result of the influence of the Mesopotamian culture ⁴⁸. As usual, various factors are at work in the gradual passage from an oral-centered culture to one where writing occupies a gradually more important space. It is certainly difficult to ascribe a single cause to a phenomenon like this. In any case, we hear speak of "writing" in the biblical texts in the book of Isaiah, such as Isa 8,1 ⁴⁹:

<p>ויאמר יהוה אלי קח־לך גליון גדול וכתב עליו בחרט אנוש למהר שלל חש בו</p>
<p>The LORD said to me: "Take a large <i>tablet</i> and write upon it in legible characters: Hasten to the spoil! Quick, to the booty!"</p>

We find another mention of writing in Hab 2,2 ⁵⁰:

<p>² ויענני יהוה ויאמר כתוב חזון ובאר על־הלחות למען ירוץ קורא בו</p>
<p>² Thus, the Eternal One replied to me and said: "Write the vision and inscribe it on <i>tablets</i>, so that it can be read swiftly".</p>

However, the transition from orality to writing is revealed clearly if we compare the call of Jeremiah with that of Ezekiel. Jeremiah began his preaching towards 627 B.C.E. (cf. Jer 25,3), so about forty years before the conquest of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians (587 B.C.E.). Ezekiel, on the other hand, dates his call in 593-592 B.C.E., when he was

⁴⁸ On the work of the scribe, see, for example, S.J. MILSTEIN, *Tracking the Master Scribe*. Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature (Oxford 2016).

⁴⁹ On this text and the problems of translation, see A.L.H.M. VAN WIERINGEN, "גליון", with bibliography (5-6). PDF downloaded from: <http://www.otw-site.eu/KLY/kly.php> — consulted 14-06-2021. The translation "tablet" is by no means certain. It could be a "mirror".

⁵⁰ On this text, see, as well as the commentaries, T. RENZ, "Reading and Running: Notes on the History of Translating the Final Clause of Hab 2:2", VT 69 (2019) 435-446.

in exile in Babylon because he had been part of the first deportation following the first siege of Jerusalem and the taking of the city in 597 B.C.E.⁵¹

Now, when Jeremiah is called, God puts his words into Jeremiah’s mouth (Jer 1,9b):

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי דְבָרִי בְּפִיךָ
The LORD said to me: “I have put my words <i>into your mouth</i> ”.

Instead, when Ezekiel is called, God asks the prophet to “eat a scroll” (Ezek 2,9 – 3,2):

<p>⁹ וַאֲרָאָה וְהִנֵּה-יָד שְׁלֹחָה אֵלַי וְהִנֵּה-בֹ מִגִּלְת־סֵפֶר</p> <p>¹⁰ וַיִּפְרֹשׂ אוֹתָהּ לִפְנֵי וְהִיא כְּתוּבָה פָּנִים וְאֲחֹר וּכְתוּב אֵלֶיהָ קְנִים וְהִנֵּה וְהִיא</p> <p>^{3:1} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן-אָדָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר-תִּמְצָא אֲכֹל אֲכֹל אֶת-הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת וְלֹךְ דְּבַר אֶל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל</p> <p>² וְאִפְתָּח אֶת-פִּי וַיֹּאכְלֵנִי אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת</p>
<p>^{2,9} I looked, and behold, a hand stretching towards me; and behold, in it there was the scroll of a <i>book</i>. ¹⁰ He then unrolled it before me and it was <i>written</i> on the inside and on the outside, and there were <i>written</i> lamentations, cries and woes.</p> <p>^{3.1} Then, he said to me: “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this <i>scroll</i>, then go, and speak to the house of Israel”. ² So, I opened my mouth, and he made me eat that <i>scroll</i>.</p>

We are clearly passing from oral to written communication, and the mention of written communication occurs in a Mesopotamian context, since Ezekiel forms part of the first groups of exiles in Babylon (Ezek 1,1). Certainly, the transition took place gradually, and we have in this case two stages in an evolution which took more time. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note the differences between the two prophetic calls. Furthermore, it is worth noting the presence in the same book of Jeremiah of an entire chapter devoted to the “book” or “scroll” (Jeremiah 36)⁵².

⁵¹ On call narratives, the classic study remains that of N. HABEL, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives”, ZAW 77 (1965) 297-323. See also W. RICHTER, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufsberichte*. Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung zu 1 Sam 9,1-10, 16, Ex 3f. und Ri 6,11b-17 (FRLANT 101; Göttingen 1970).

⁵² On this text, see, for example, P. BOVATI – P. BASTA, “*Ci ha parlato per mezzo dei profeti*”. *Ermeneutica biblica* (Roma – Cisinello Balsamo [Milano] 2010) 151-163; B. ROSSI, “Lo scritto profetico in Ger 36: tra fragilità e sovversione”, *«Insegnaci a contare i nostri giorni e giungeremo al cuore della sapienza»* (Sal 90,12). Atti della XLV Settimana Biblica Nazionale (Roma, 10-14 Settembre 2018) (eds. F. DALLA VECCHIA – D. SCAIOLA) (RSB 32; Bologna 2020) 199-219. See also the discussion of this text in *Jeremiah’s Scriptures*. Production, Reception, Interaction, and Transformation (eds. H. NAJMAN – K. SCHMID) (Leiden – Boston, MA 2017); cf. the articles of F. HARTENSTEIN, “Prophets, Princes, and Kings: Prophecy and Prophetic Books According to Jeremiah 36”, 70-91; L. PANOV, “King

From then on, the “book” or “scroll” grew in importance. It is no surprise that, in the account of 2 Kings 22–23, the most important character is the “scroll” or “book” discovered in the temple ⁵³. Of all the characters present on stage, the scroll of the law was to survive the conquest of Jerusalem: the king was to disappear, along with the temple, the priests and the prophets, but the book of the law was not to disappear. Moreover, this story demonstrates that the Law of Moses existed, in written form, before the Babylonian Exile. It was not written in exile, and it is this Law that Ezra brought to Jerusalem after the Exile (Ezra 7,14.26; Neh 8,1). Hence also the importance of showing that the Law was written by Moses in person (Exod 24,4; Deut 31,9.24). As we have seen, contact with the Mesopotamian world gave a not insignificant impulse to conferring a decisive position to written documents in the biblical tradition ⁵⁴.

IV. THE HELLENISTIC WORLD: GREEK *PAIDEIA* AND JEWISH *PAIDEIA* ⁵⁵

Prologue of Sirach

¹ πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἡμῖν διὰ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν ² καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν κατ’ αὐτοὺς ἠκολουθηκότων δεδομένων ³ ὑπὲρ ὧν δέον ἐστὶν ἐπαινεῖν τὸν Ἰσραὴλ παιδείας καὶ σοφίας.

Jehoiakim’s Attempt to Destroy the Written Word of God (Jeremiah 36). A Response to Friedheim Hartenstein”, 92-97; J.J. WHITE, “Scribal Loyalty and the Burning of the Scroll in Jeremiah 36. A Response to Friedheim Hartenstein”, 98-102.

⁵³ Among the studies on 2 Kings 22-23, see, for example, T.C. RÖMER, “Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography: On ‘Book-Finding’ and Other Literary Strategies”, *ZAW* 109 (1997) 1-11; J.-P. SONNET, “‘Le livre trouvé’”. 2 Rois 22 dans sa finalité narrative”, *NRT* 116 (1994) 836-861 = “‘Il libro trovato’. 2 Re 22 nella sua finalità narrativa”, *L'alleanza della lettura*. Questioni di poetica narrativa nella Bibbia ebraica (Lectio 1; Cinisello Balsamo – Roma 2011) 103-134; P.R. DAVIES, “Josiah and the Law Book”, *Good Kings and Bad Kings* (ed. L.L. GRABBE) (LHBOTS = JSOTS 393; London 2005) 64-76; E. BEN ZVI, “Imagining Josiah’s Book and the Implications of Imagining it in Early Persian Yehud”, *Berührungspunkte*. Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift für Rainer Albertz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag (eds. U. KOTTSEPER – R. SCHMITT – J. WÖHRLE) (AOAT 350; Münster 2008) 193-212; N. NA’AMAN, “The ‘Discovered Book’ and the Legitimation of Josiah’s Reform”, *JBL* 130 (2011) 47-62; D.V. EDELMAN (ed.), *Deuteronomy-Kings as Emerging Authoritative Books*. A Conversation (Ancient Near East Monographs 6; Atlanta, GA 2014).

⁵⁴ On this point, see the important contributions of K. VAN DER TOORN (ed.), *The Image and the Book*. Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21; Leuven 1997); K. VAN DER TOORN, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA 2007).

⁵⁵ The classic study of the relationships between the biblical and Greek worlds is that of M. HENGEL, *Judentum und Hellenismus*. Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2.Jh. v.Chr. (WUNT 10; Tübingen 1969) =

Many important teachings have been given to us by the Law, the prophets and other subsequent writings for which it is right to praise Israel for its doctrine and wisdom.

The prologue of Sirach, written by the grandson of the author of the deuterocanonical book which is also called Ecclesiasticus, contains two statements of special significance for the understanding of biblical literature⁵⁶. The first is the mention of a literature divided into three parts: the Law, the prophets and the other books. These are the three familiar parts of the Hebrew Bible, *Torah*, *Nebi'im* and *Ketûbîm*. We are in the second century B.C.E., and the date mentioned by the grandson of Jesus ben Sira corresponds to 132 B.C.E. However, it is difficult to know the exact content of these three sections of the “library of Israel”. In any case, the text supposes the existence of a literature, and of a structured literature. Along the same lines, the book of Sirach mentions the Twelve Minor Prophets as a unit:

καὶ τῶν δώδεκα προφητῶν τὰ ὀστᾶ ἀναθάλοι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῶν παρεκάλεσαν γὰρ τὸν Ἰακώβ καὶ ἐλυτρώσαντο αὐτοὺς ἐν πίστει ἐλπίδος

May the bones of the twelve prophets rise again from their tomb, because they have comforted Jacob and rescued them with their confident hope.

The second element is the mention of παιδεία and σοφία. The first word means “education”, “discipline”, “instruction”, “doctrine”. The second is easier to translate: it is about wisdom, knowledge. At any rate,

Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period. 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA 1974; London 2012). Cf. L.H. FELDMAN, “Hengel’s *Judaism and Hellenism* in Retrospect: An Assessment”, *JBL* 96 (1977) 371-382; T. RAJAK, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*. Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 48; Leiden – Boston, MA 2001) esp. chapter 1: “Judaism and Hellenism Revisited”, 3-10; J. FREY, “‘Judaism’ and ‘Hellenism’: Martin Hengel’s Work in Perspective”, *Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World* (eds. M. POPOVIĆ – M. SCHOONOVER – M. VANDENBERGHE) (SJSJ 178; Leiden – Boston, MA 2017) 96-118.

⁵⁶ On Ben Sira’s prologue, see, among others, P.W. SKEHAN – A.A. DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. A New Translation with Notes — Introduction and Commentary (AB 39; New York 1987) 132-135. See also H.M. ORLINSKY, “Some Terms in the Prologue to Ben Sira and the Hebrew Canon”, *JBL* 110 (1991) 483-490; B.G. WRIGHT III, “Why a Prologue? Ben Sira’s Grandson and His Greek Translation”, *Emanuel*. Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov (eds. S.M. PAUL et al.) (SVT 94; Leiden 2003) 633-644; F. BORCHARDT, “Prologue of Sirach (Ben Sira) and the Question of Canon”, *Sacra Scriptura*. How “Non-canonical” Texts Functioned in Early Judaism and Early Christianity (eds. J.H. CHARLESWORTH – L.M. McDONALD with B.A. JURGENS) (Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies 20; London – New Delhi – New York 2015) 64-71.

we are in the world of knowing and teaching. That is the point that I wish to highlight now. According to the prologue of Sirach, Israel is to be praised not for its territorial conquests and political power, not for the glory of its sovereigns, not for its economic wealth or the splendour of its monuments and works of art, but for its instruction and wisdom. Israel's glory is to be sought in a "knowing", and a knowing contained in a tripartite literature.

Now, this ideal made up of instruction and wisdom is typical of a culture that is well known, the Hellenistic culture. In fact, by contrast with other known ancient civilisations, the Greek world made use of culture to unite the peoples who formed part of the hereditary kingdoms that were the result of the conquests of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.E.). We must not forget that the Greek world stretched from Marseilles to Babylon and beyond. In reality, Alexander the Great had arrived at the gates of India and the Himalayas.

The Greek world and, above all, the Hellenistic world created by the conquests of Alexander the Great rested, certainly, on a powerful and well-organised force, the Macedonian army, and on a strong administration. It also united the conquered peoples through its culture. This contrasts with the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires, which settled, rather, for ensuring the peace and security of their empires and the regular payment of taxes or tribute. The Greek world was more democratic, although not in the modern sense of the word. It was proud of its culture and cultivated it among the highest classes of society, the ruling classes, but also among the classes that were important economically, such as merchants. The Greek conquerors educated the members of the richest and most powerful classes, the oligarchy. This ideal bears a name in the Greek and Hellenistic world: *paideia* ⁵⁷.

According to the Greek ideal, which goes back to the Homeric period and which we find again in Plato and Aristotle, a person can realise himself in two states. The first is knowledge of himself and knowledge of the world. That means that human life is inseparable from the search for truth. Secondly, the human person is linked to the *polis*, the city, and his life is essentially social and "political" in the original sense of the word.

⁵⁷ On this subject, see, for example, G. SOLA, *La formazione originaria. Paideia, humanitas, perfectio, dignitas hominis, Bildung* (Firenze 2016); M. GENNARI, *Dalla paidia classica alla Bildung divina* (Firenze 2017); M.-P. DE HOZ – J.L. GARCÍA ALONSO – L.A. GUICHARD ROMERO (eds.), *Greek Paideia and Local Tradition in the Graeco-Roman East* (Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT 2020). On the relationship between Greek *paideia* and Jewish *paideia*, see J.M. ZURAWSKI, *Jewish Paideia in the Hellenistic Diaspora. Discussing Education, Shaping Identity* (Diss. University of Michigan 2016) and his numerous contributions.

The person realises himself when he participates in and contributes to the life of the *polis*.

To attain this ideal, the Greek world developed a system of education with a regular curriculum, with libraries and with a list of books to be studied. Here, Homer was in first place and became a kind of “holy book”. The phenomenon was studied exhaustively by a great German scholar, Werner Jaeger ⁵⁸. In France, the educational system of the Greek and Roman world was the object of various studies by another great name, Henri-Irénée Marrou ⁵⁹.

Right from the 5th century B.C.E. in Athens, the education of the young involved two aspects, as we have seen: an intellectual education and a civic, ethical and spiritual formation to prepare the future citizens to participate positively in the life of the *polis*. *Paideia* distinguished the Greek citizen from the uncivilized barbarian who was just that, uneducated. According to Henri-Irénée Marrou: “*Paideia* is simultaneously a spiritual and institutional process, ideal and material, which developed in a close, unitary play between the two aspects or elements, gazing in the direction of a universalisation of man which is neatly manifested in the Latin concept of *humanitas*” ⁶⁰.

Now, this idea of humanity supposes an ideal which surpasses the limits of the individual. As Werner Jaeger puts it:

Their discovery of man is not the discovery of the subjective I, but the acquiring of the awareness of the universal laws of human nature. The spiritual principle of the Greeks is not individualism but, rather, “humanism”, if it is legitimate to use the word deliberately in its original classical sense. Humanism comes from *humanitas*. Beyond the more ancient and common meaning, which does not interest us here, from the time of Varro and Cicero until later, this word had another meaning, deeper and more severe: it indicates the education of man to his true form, his true humanity. This is the real Greek *paideia*. [...] it does not move from the singular, rather, from the idea. Above the man-herd, as above the man claiming to be the autonomous I, stands the man as idea, and such he is always considered by the Greeks, as educators or poets, artists and investigators ⁶¹.

⁵⁸ W. JAEGER, *Paideia*. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen (Berlin 1934, 2010) = *Paideia*. The Ideals of Greek Culture. Translated from the Second German Edition by Gilbert Highet (New York 1986) = *Paideia*. La formazione dell'uomo greco. Introduzione di Giovanni Reale (Il pensiero occidentale; Milano 2003); IDEM, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge, MA 1961) = *Cristianesimo primitivo e paideia greca* (Firenze 1966).

⁵⁹ H.I. MARROU, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*. 2 vols. (Paris 1948, 1981) = *A History of Education in Antiquity* (Madison, WI 1982) = *Storia dell'educazione nell'antichità* (Roma 1950).

⁶⁰ MARROU, *Storia dell'educazione*. Cited by Maria VENUTI, *Sofocle e la formazione nell'età tragica dei Greci* (Palermo 2003) 14.

⁶¹ JAEGER, *Paideia*. La formazione dell'uomo greco, 16.

The formation involves different subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, geometry, music, literature, rhetoric and logic, subjects that are always accompanied by gymnastics and various forms of physical culture. Later, there were lessons in design and painting. This more theoretical formation was complemented by a formation and gradual participation in public life.

As said earlier, to promote this educational ideal, tools were needed. Hence the creation of libraries, those of Athens and, above all, Alexandria being the most famous ⁶². Obviously, there were such collections in all the great centres of the Hellenistic world.

Where there were libraries there were also the ancestors of our catalogues. In this way, in the Greek world, there arose the notion of a “literary canon” ⁶³. As we know, only the works catalogued in the literary canons have survived, for example, the Greek tragedies.

If we were to ask what was happening at the same time in the Jewish world, we cannot fail to mention the Jewish community of Alexandria. Ben Sira’s grandson lived there, and there he translated his grandfather’s work into Greek. There too lived Philo of Alexandria. There the Bible was translated into Greek, the so-called Septuagint; and there the book of Wisdom was composed ⁶⁴.

All this means that the Jewish world was in constant contact with the Greek world. The ideal of *paideia* was not rejected. On the contrary, it was taken up and adapted to the Jews’ way of life. The book of Sirach can be considered as a manual of Jewish *paideia*, a manual that contains the elements essential for the education of Jewish youth. That is what is affirmed by the prologue, written by Ben Sira’s grandson, as we have seen: “Many

⁶² The Greek and Hellenistic world also developed the art of copying, compiling, correcting and transmitting great literary texts. See L.D. REYNOLDS – N.G. WILSON, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford 1974).

⁶³ See, among others, I. MATIJAŠIĆ, *Shaping the Canons of Ancient Greek Historiography. Imitation, Classicism, and Literary Criticism* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 359; Berlin – Boston, MA 2018).

⁶⁴ On this topic, see J.J. COLLINS, “Wisdom as Genre and as Tradition in the Book of Sirach”, *Sirach and Its Contexts. The Pursuit of Wisdom and Human Flourishing* (eds. S. ADAMS – G. GOERING – M.J. GOFF) (SJSJ 196; Leiden – Boston, MA 2021) 15-32; K. MARTIN HOGAN – M. GOFF – E. WASSERMAN (eds.), *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Early Judaism and Its Literature 41; Atlanta, GA 2017); J.M. ZURAWSKI, “From Musar to Paideia, from Torah to Nomos: How the Translation of the Septuagint Impacted the Paideutic Ideal in Hellenistic Judaism”, *XV Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Munich, 2013* (eds. W. KRAUS – M. MEISER – M.N. VAN DER MEER) (SBLSCS 64; Atlanta, GA 2016) 527-550; IDEM, “Paideia: A Multifarious and Unifying Concept in the Wisdom of Solomon”, *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (eds. K. MARTIN HOGAN – M. GOFF – E. WASSERMAN) (SBL Early Judaism and its Literature 41; Atlanta, GA 2017) 195-214.

important teachings have been given to us by the Law, the prophets and other subsequent writings for which it is right to praise Israel for its *doctrine* (παιδεία) and *wisdom* (σοφία)” (Prologue, 1) ⁶⁵. Let us add that Ben Sira not only takes up into his account a pedagogic ideal typical of Greece. He also integrates various elements of the Hellenistic culture in his educational programme. As Samuel L. Adams puts it: “This lifelong process involves the search for insight from a variety of places, including ideas from the Hellenistic world that had begun to influence Judeans on a limited basis during the period of Ben Sira’s career. His transitional voice and allegiance to the Torah should not lead us to label him an exclusivist. Arguments to the contrary misinterpret the more receptive understanding of παιδεία in Sirach” ⁶⁶.

The same is even more true of the book of Wisdom. This is maintained by a recent study on the subject:

Taken as a whole, *paideia* comes to represent an ideal, universal educational system which leads, ultimately, to immortality. It includes the content of education — the author’s own words of *paideia* in the text and Wisdom’s gift of complete knowledge — and it incorporates the means of distilling that education: *musar*, divine testing, even corporeal death. This *paideia* does not refer solely to a particular law code or ancestral tradition; it is not meant to express exclusively the curriculum of Hellenistic education. It may include both of these, but it is more. It includes the process by which God and Wisdom educate humanity, the divine test that is this world perceptible to the senses and the somatic death that is a natural part of it ⁶⁷.

In effect, “The entire writing [the Book of Wisdom] then becomes a pedagogical tool, a textbook for righteous living” ⁶⁸.

The close encounter between the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures, particularly in the elaboration of an educational programme inspired by the ideal of Greek *paideia*, was a key element in the formation of biblical literature, and that for three reasons. First, because the biblical books became instruments of education, as claimed by the Prologue of Sirach. The Jewish world wanted to educate, and to provide the instruments of an authentic *paideia* for the future members of the people. Second, because it encouraged the collection and formation of a library, or libraries, for example, in the temple of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Macc 2,13-15) and in the synagogues.

⁶⁵ See J.M. ZURAWSKI – G. BOCCACCINI (eds.), *Second Temple Jewish “Paideia” in Context* (BZAW 228; Berlin – Boston, MA 2017), especially F. UEBERSCHAEER, “Jewish Education in Ben Sira”, 29-46, and 47-58.

⁶⁶ S.L. ADAMS, “Reassessing the Exclusivism of Ben Sira’s Jewish Paideia”, *Second Temple Jewish “Paideia” in Context*, 47-58, esp. 58.

⁶⁷ ZURAWSKI, “Paideia”, 195-214, here 211.

⁶⁸ ZURAWSKI, “Paideia”, 198.

Certainly, it is difficult to compare the library of Alexandria with the cupboard in a synagogue. However, the ideal is to possess a library, and we can think that the translation of the Bible into Greek formed part of this ideal, that is to say, to constitute a “national library” with the treasures of the Jewish tradition which are at the service of the education of the youth⁶⁹. Third, because the idea of a canon — a list of literary works indispensable for the formation of future members of the people — was also borrowed, at least partly, from the literary canons of the Greeks⁷⁰. In this field, as in the others, there is more than one factor, and it would hardly be reasonable to attribute the birth of the Jewish canon solely to the Hellenistic canons⁷¹. Nonetheless, there is a certain parallelism between the two. Moreover, the presence of a praise of the fathers in Sirach (Si 44–50)⁷², just as of a mid-rashic reading of the history of Israel in the book of Wisdom (Wis 11–19)⁷³,

⁶⁹ On the libraries in antiquity, see L. CASSON, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven, CT 2001); J.S. DU TOIT, *Textual Memory. Ancient Archives, Libraries and the Hebrew Bible* (Social World of Biblical Antiquity 2/6; Sheffield 2011).

⁷⁰ An idea defended by D. GEORGI, “Die Aristoteles- und Theophrastausgabe des Andronikus von Rhodus. Ein Beitrag zur Kanonproblematik”, *Konsequente Traditionsgeschichte. Festschrift für Klaus Baltzer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Hrsg. R. BARTELMUS u.a.) (OBO 126; Freiburg Schweiz – Göttingen 1993) 45–78; J.C. VANDERKAM, “Revealed Literature in the Second Temple Period”, *From Revelation to Canon. Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (SJSJ 62; Leiden 2000) 1–30, esp. 30. For a critical opinion regarding the question, see K. VAN DER TOORN, “From Catalogue to Canon? An Assessment of the Library Hypothesis as a Contribution to the Debate about the Biblical Canon”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 63 (2006) 6–16.

⁷¹ On the biblical canon, see, in alphabetical order, P.S. ALEXANDER – J.-D. KAESTLI (eds.), *The Canon of Scripture in Jewish and Christian Tradition — Le canon des Écritures dans les traditions juives et chrétiennes* (Lausanne 2007); J.-M. AUWERS – H.J. DE JONGE (eds.), *The Biblical Canons* (BETL 163; Leuven 2002); E.-M. BECKER – S. SCHOLZ (Hrsg.), *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin – New York 2011); R.T. BECKWITH, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI 1985); J. BREMMER, “From Holy Books to Holy Bible: An Itinerary from Ancient Greece to Modern Islam via Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity”, *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. M. POPOVIĆ) (JSJS 141; Leiden – Boston, MA 2010) 327–360; P.R. DAVIES, *Scribes and Schools. The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Louisville, KY 1998); T.H. LIM – K. AKIYAMA (eds.), *When Texts are Canonized* (Brown Judaic Studies 359; Providence, RI 2017); L.M. McDONALD, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Peabody, MA 1988, ²1995); IDEM, *The Biblical Canon. Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA ³2007).

⁷² On this text, see among others, A. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, “Ben Sira’s Praise of the Fathers: A Canon-Conscious Reading”, *Ben Sira’s God* (ed. R. EGGER-WENZEL) (BZAW 321; Berlin 2002) 235–267.

⁷³ See, for example, S. CHEON, *The Exodus Story in the Wisdom of Solomon. A Study in Biblical Interpretation* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha. Supplement Series 23; Sheffield 1997); B.J. LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, “The Hermeneutics of Exodus in the Book of Wisdom”, *The Interpretation of Exodus. Studies in Honour of Cornelis Houtman* (ed. R. ROUKEMA) (Leuven 2006) 97–116; J. ZSENGELLER, “‘The Taste of Paradise’: Interpretation of Exodus and Manna in the Book of Wisdom”, *Studies in the*

can lead to the thought that people and events of the nation's history have become a source of *paideia* and *sophia* for the young members of the people of Israel.

V. CONCLUSION

The Fathers of the Church used the episode of the spoiling of the Egyptians to justify the use of elements from the non-Christian cultures in the preaching of the Gospel and in the daily life of Christians (Exod 3,21-22; 11,2-3; 12,35-36)⁷⁴. We have seen that ancient Israel acted in the same way. Instead of closing in on itself and rejecting every kind of foreign influence, in a majority of cases, ancient Israel appropriated elements of the dominant culture, assimilated them and transformed them for its own use. Thus, many of the essential elements of the religion of ancient Israel have a foreign origin. Usually, however, Israel interpreted and adapted these elements for a new purpose. In a simple formula: the notes of its melodies are often foreign in origin but the music is not; and the legacy of ancient Israel is not in the notes, it is in the music.

Brief epilogue

With these words, I conclude my time teaching at the Biblical Institute in Rome for the best part of forty years. It is not always easy to end what represents a whole life's commitment. Some among my predecessors, some among my own teachers, have expressed very different sentiments on reaching this point. One of them finished, as he always finished his lectures, by saying: "There are many other things but that will be for the next time". Certainly, there was no next time. This was the last. Others

Book of Wisdom (eds. G.G. XERAVITS – J. ZSENGELLÉR) (JSJS 142; Leiden – Boston, MA 2010) 197-216.

⁷⁴ See, for example, ORIGEN, *Letter to Gregory*; *Homilies on Exodus*, XI, 6; *Homilies on Leviticus*, VII, 6; *Contra Celsum*, passim; AUGUSTINE, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 40. The idea is already present in Philo of Alexandria. See M. PEREIRA, "From the Spoils of Egypt: An Analysis of Origen's Letter to Gregory", *Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer*. Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress, University School of Philosophy and Education "Ignatianum", Kraków, Poland 31 August – 4 September 2009 (eds. S. KACZMAREK – H. PIETRAS) (BETL 244; Leuven 2011) 221-248; J.S. ALLEN, *The Despoliation of Egypt in Pre-rabbinic, Rabbinic and Patristic Traditions* (Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 92; Leiden – Boston, MA 2008); IDEM, "The Despoliation of Egypt: Origen and Augustine — From Stolen Treasures to Saved Texts", *Israel's Exodus in Trans-disciplinary Perspective*. Text, Archaeology, Culture and Geoscience (eds. T.E. LEVY – T. SCHNEIDER – W.H.C. PROPP) (Cham, Switzerland 2015) 347-356.

have finished on a note of regret, with a certain sorrow because they had the impression of not having found much favour. Their ideas, their interests did not seem to have been shared or sufficiently shared. One even said that he had the feeling of speaking in the wilderness. So, at the end of an academic career, I ask myself, what can we leave behind us, what was worth the trouble. What remains of so many years of teaching? Some theories, some ideas, some hypotheses? Perhaps, but all this changes, and changes rapidly. Or else some methods, some reading aids, some new ways of interpreting the ancient biblical texts? Yes, because the aids and tools for reading are indispensable. But even the tools and the methods can change and be replaced by instruments that are more precise and more useful. So, then, what was worth the trouble of transmitting to future generations? I prefer to explain the thing with a short story which I am borrowing from Tony de Mello, one of the many stories contained in his book, The Song of the Bird ⁷⁵. I shall modify this account for my purpose.

In a country village, there was once a water-seller. Every morning, he used to go with his buckets fastened to his yoke. He went to the well and drew water, using a rope and a pulley. He filled the buckets and carried them with the yoke into the village streets where he dispensed water to those who needed it. However, as he grew old, it became clear that the work was becoming increasingly onerous. What was he to do? He decided to call the villagers, showed them the way to the well and the place of the well. Then, there, in front of the well, he showed them all how to manage the rope on the pulley, how to draw water and to pull on the bucket; then, how to attach the buckets carefully in balance on the yoke and how to transport the water without losing a single drop. Then, having explained everything, he reflected for a moment, asking himself if he had forgotten anything. Then, he said: "Yes, I must teach you one last thing, and it the most important thing of all. Without this, the yoke is no use, the buckets are no use, the pulley is no use and the rope is no use. Even the water is useless. I must teach you to be ... thirsty".

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⁷⁵ Anthony DE MELLO, *The Song of the Bird* (New York 1982) 60: "River Water for Sale".

SUMMARY

The purpose of this contribution is to show that Ancient Israel continuously borrowed important religious and cultural elements from its neighbors. Without attempting to be exhaustive, we pinpoint various influences from Canaan, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece on Ancient Israel. Canaanite religion, Egyptian Wisdom, Mesopotamian covenant diplomacy, prophetism, legislation and scribal culture, and Greek *paideia* help us understand better biblical literature which never developed in a ivory tower, but adopted and adapted rather than rejected the best that those cultures had to offer.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON EXOD 6,2-8 AND THE PRIESTLY PERIODIZATION

I. INTRODUCTION

A near-consensus view holds that the Priestly theology includes a three-stage periodization concerning the name of the Israelite deity. It is assumed that the earliest Israelites knew their deity as Elohim, the patriarchs recognised their deity as El-Shadday, and finally Moses learned the personal name YHWH. This Priestly concept of progressive revelation conflicts with the non-P text, in which the name YHWH is used from the beginning of its history. As a corollary, many scholars take this periodization as proof of the internal logic in the Priestly author's theological worldview¹. How intrinsically and extensively this periodization is used by P, however, has rarely been placed under scrutiny². Traditional scholarship has attributed progressive revelation to both E and P. In an earlier essay published in this journal, I tackled the progressive revelation in E and concluded that the theory should be reserved for P³. There I merely assumed that progressive revelation applies well in P when compared with E. Upon further examination, however, I realized that the matter is more complicated than I thought. The notion of progressive revelation may work better in P, but that does not necessarily mean that it was the guiding principle upon which P deliberately chose which divine name to employ in each segment of the Priestly corpus. It appears possible that the sense of periodization is accidental to P's editorial combination of discrete tradition blocks that happened to employ different divine names.

In this essay, I investigate afresh the nature of P's periodization by studying Exod 6,2-8, the anchor point of the system of P's epochal division. No exhaustive treatment is possible here. My aim is to inquire if the textual evidence shows that P intentionally divided history into three

¹ For the most recent implementation of this idea, see S. BOORER, *The Vision of the Priestly Narrative. Its Genre and Hermeneutics of Time* (Ancient Israel and its Literature 27; Atlanta, GA 2016) 35, 50, 437-443, 506-513.

² Of course, not every historical critic accepts this notion. See, e.g., N. LOHFINK, "Die priesterschriftliche Abwertung der Tradition von der Offenbarung des Jahwenamens an Mose", *Bib* 49 (1968) 1-8; IDEM, *Theology of the Pentateuch. Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (Minneapolis, MN 1994) 154 n. 42.

³ K.P. HONG, "Elohim, the Elohist, and the Theory of Progressive Revelation", *Bib* 98 (2017) 321-338.

segments and arranged divine appellations to fit the idea that the human knowledge of God evolved and that God's true name was first revealed to Moses. By asking a set of questions about the extent, depth, and effectiveness of the alleged periodization, I aim to better understand the nature of the divisions implanted in P and to caution against overtheorizing Exod 6,2-8.

II. PRIESTLY PERIODIZATION AND PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

There is a gap between what the theory claims and what the text betrays. The text simply shows that (1) the three segments of the P text employ Elohim, El-Shadday, and YHWH, respectively, and (2) a comment (Exod 6,3) facilitates a transition from the era of El-Shadday to the era of YHWH: "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El-Shadday, but as for my name YHWH, I have not made myself known to them". (3) This retrospective statement is echoed in a string of Priestly passages in Genesis (17,1; 28,3; 35,11; 48,3) — hereafter called the El-Shadday layer — in which God appears to the patriarchs under the name of El-Shadday.

This textual evidence is open to interpretation, however. From the critical standpoint, one can say that the division signifies P's intentional design of three epochs in which there was progress in the revelation of YHWH that culminated at Sinai. However, one can also argue that this division merely evinces vestiges of the disparate tradition blocks that were combined and harmonized by P. The former approach works better with the source model, while the latter works better with the redaction model. Most critical opinions on P's periodization fall in between these two ends of the spectrum. This paper tackles the former, especially those at one extreme that is strictly based on the theory of progressive revelation. These interpreters highlight P's intentional design, which they use in support of P's thematic and theological coherence⁴. They tend to marvel at P's systematic choice of divine epithets in accordance with humanity's growing knowledge of YHWH's true identity. The core idea here is that before the revelation of YHWH, P did not employ the name so as to avoid

⁴ These may roughly coincide with the source critics, but not all of them would accept this romantic view of P's intentional design. Thus, I shall not frame my discussion on the debate over the nature of P as a source or a redaction. This debate is hardly settled, despite the recent scholarly tendency to support its nature as a source. For a recent summary and list of literature, see D.M. CARR, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*. Historical and Literary Approaches (Louisville, KY 1996) 43-47, and more recently BOORER, *The Vision of the Priestly Narrative*, 1-47. In addition, see H. UTZSCHNEIDER – W. OSWALD, *Exodus 1–15* (IECOT; Stuttgart 2015) 162-163.

its anachronistic use ⁵. One can see why this theory was attractive to historians of religion of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but it also begs the question of whether their evolutionary scheme unduly influenced their interpretation of the textual evidence.

For those scholars who base P's periodization on the idea of progressive revelation, Exod 6,2-8 serves as a turning point in which God's personal name is finally revealed in the Priestly corpus. Naturally, this account has been assumed as the Priestly parallel to the non-P call narrative in Exodus 3-4. Yet it has been heavily debated whether Exod 6,2-8 can truly be taken as the grand revelation of the name YHWH ⁶. While there is no question that the non-P version is structured as a call narrative in which a hero encounters his deity for the first time, this Priestly account features fewer formal, linguistic, and structural traits as such, when it is read independently from the source-critical framework. Many assume 'ānî yhwḥ as a sign of revelation, but this self-identification formula (*Selbstvorstellungsformel*) is not bound to introducing a new name. "I am YHWH" continues to appear in the Hebrew Bible after this moment and in settings other than an introduction of a new name. Instead, this formula is featured most frequently as a means of reassuring the audience of YHWH's salvific power that will ensure the realization of the covenant ⁷. Still, even those

⁵ See, for example, B.J. SCHWARTZ, "Does Recent Scholarship's Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis Constitute Grounds for Its Rejection?", *The Pentateuch*. International Perspectives on Current Research (eds. T.B. DOZEMAN – K. SCHMID – B.J. SCHWARTZ) (FAT 78; Tübingen 2011) 3-16, 11-12; J.S. BADEN, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch* (FAT 68; Tübingen 2009) 74, 226-227; IDEM, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*. Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis (New Haven, CT 2012) 21-23.

⁶ Scholars have repeatedly noted that this account is ill-fitted as a call narrative or a first revelation. Particularly, J.L. Ska has argued, based on formal observations and comparisons with similar accounts, that this account is either a "disputation" in reply to an accusation or a "salvation oracle" in response to a complaint: J.L. Ska, "La place d'Ex 6,2-8", *ZAW* 94 (1982) 530-548. Indeed, there is no call of Moses as a divine agent, and there is no commission. Neither "go/come! (*lĕkā*)" nor "I will send you (*'ešlāḥākā*)" (cf. 3,10) appears in this narrative. Accordingly, UTZSCHNEIDER – OSWALD (*Exodus 1-15*, 163) observe: "[This account] as such is completely inappropriate as a personal call story". See also: B.S. CHILDS, *Exodus*. A Commentary (OTL; London 1974) 113; C. HOUTMAN, *Exodus 1:1 – 7:13* (HCOT; Kampen 1993) 101; C.R. SEITZ, "The Call of Moses and the 'Revelation' of the Divine Name", *Theological Exegesis*. Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs (eds. C.R. SEITZ – K. GREENE-MCCREIGHT) (Grand Rapids, MI 1999) 145-161, esp. 156; A. SURLS, *Making Sense of the Divine Name in the Book of Exodus*. From Etymology to Literary Onomastics (BBRSup 17; Winona Lake, IN 2017) 88-89.

⁷ Like Ezekiel 20, Exodus 6 is saturated with the covenant motif. Israel is taken as God's own people; YHWH is to be their own God (Exod 6,7a). Ska provides a detailed comparison with similar attestations in Lev 18,1, Ezekiel 20, and Isaiah 2 ("La place d'Ex 6,2-8", 538-540). Near Eastern parallels show that this formula was not restricted to the introduction of an unknown name but also appeared in "the declarations of kings", or as an invocation, generally in a liturgical setting, of a figure, either royal or divine, whose salvific power is called upon. See, for example, U. CASSUTO, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem

who hesitate to take Exod 6,2-8 as a call narrative are often persuaded to accept it as an account of the revelation of YHWH because of the explicit claim in verse 3 ⁸: “As for my name Yhwh, I have not made myself known to them” ⁹. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that the theory of progressive revelation — and also the interpreters who explain P’s periodization based on it — hangs on this single verse, and so probing the nature of Exod 6,3 will be critical in developing a better understanding of the periodization employed by P.

III. EXOD 6,2-8 AS BRIDGE TEXT

Before we delve into Exod 6,3, it is necessary to briefly survey the nature of 6,2-8 as a unit. While scholars continue to debate the nature and genre of Exod 6,2-8, there is one undisputed fact that is frequently neglected by scholars: the clear editorial functional of Exod 6,2-8. Redaction-critically, this is a typical bridge text which, placed at the beginning of the Exodus tradition, connects back to the previous ancestral tradition. It is important to note that every constituent element of this unit functions as a cross-reference. Exod 6,2-3, as noted, organizes a tight connection to the ancestral story and reconciles the major discrepancy in the use of divine appellations in the two tradition blocks ¹⁰. Exod 6,4-5 combines major themes of the ancestral and Exodus traditions. It provides a twofold

1967) 76-78; CHILDS, *Exodus*, 113; W. ZIMMERLI, *I am Yahweh* (Atlanta, GA 1982); N.M. SARNA, *Exodus* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia, PA 1991) 31; J. LUST, “Exodus 6,2-8 and Ezekiel”, *Studies in the Book of Exodus*. Redaction, Reception, Interpretation (ed. M. VERVENNE) (BETL 126; Leuven) 209-224, esp. 214 n. 17; G.I. DAVIES, “The Exegesis of the Divine Name in Exodus”, *The God of Israel* (ed. R.P. GORDON) (Cambridge 2007) 139-156, esp. 147-148. Cf. M. OLIVA, “Revelación del nombre de Yahweh en la ‘Historia sacerdotal’: Ex 6,2-8”, *Bib* 52 (1971) 1-19, who argues for a prophetic context.

⁸ See, e.g., E. BLUM, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin 1990) 234; J.C. GERTZ, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung*. Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch (FRLANT 186; Göttingen 2000) 240; T.B. DOZEMAN, *Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 165. See also J.L. SKA, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN 2006) 147, 153.

⁹ This sentence is quite complex, which makes interpretation more difficult. For a discussion of the grammatical issues in this passage, see W.R. GARR, “The Grammar and Interpretation of Exodus 6:3”, *JBL* 111 (1992) 385-408; SEITZ, “The Call of Moses”, 157; SURLS, *Making Sense of the Divine Name*, 92-97. See also B. JACOB, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken, NJ 1992) 150.

¹⁰ See, e.g., K. SCHMID, “The So-Called Yahwist and the Literary Gap Between Genesis and Exodus”, *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (eds. T.B. DOZEMAN – K. SCHMID) (Atlanta, GA 2006) 29-50, esp. 41; A. TOBOLOWSKY, *The Sons of Jacob and the Sons of Herakles*. The History of the Tribal System and the Organization of Biblical Identity (FAT II/96; Tübingen 2017) 127.

reason for YHWH ending his long neglect of the suffering of his people. YHWH remembers the ancestral covenant (v. 4) and hears Israel's groaning in Egypt (v. 5). In Exod 6,6-8, a divine speech to the Israelites follows which is framed by the emphatic *'ānî yhwḥ*. Though this speech is saturated with the Exodus motif (6,6-7), it concludes with a reference to the upcoming realization of the promise of land that was made to the ancestral triad (6,8). Moreover, the covenant language in Exod 6,8 recollects the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17 and anticipates the eventual covenant at Sinai, echoing passages like Exod 29,45-46. Exodus 6,2-8, therefore, functions as an editorial bridge text that connects the ancestral tradition to the Sinai tradition, thus instilling a sense of coherence to the large scope of the Priestly corpus ¹¹. If so, one may have to understand the nature of Exod 6,3 primarily in line with this editorial purpose, which must be discerned strictly by its function: it harmonizes the conflicting divine appellations of the two tradition blocks that P combines.

It is understandable that this redactional feature garners less attention today, a time when an increasing number of scholars conceive P as a source. However, against the recent movement that promotes P as the first architect who combined the discrete ancestral and Exodus traditions, more attention is required as to how Exod 6,2-8 plays a role in combining these tradition blocks ¹². See how Konrad Schmid explains the function of this passage:

P appears to have found this twofold origin of Israel in the existing tradition of the ancestors and of the exodus. The progressive revelation theory of Exod 6:3 suggests that, before P, the flow of the ancestral tradition and the exodus story as two sequential epochs of the prehistory of Israel was not common knowledge. [...] Rather, it shows that P seeks to harmonize two fundamentally different tradition blocks with one another ¹³.

Note here that Schmid acknowledges both the underlying traditions of which P made use and P's editorial combination of them. But his methodological position — P as a source — forces him to interpret it under the source-critical scheme of progressive revelation, neglecting the possibility

¹¹ Thus, redaction-critically, this text may belong to a late stage of P's internal strata. See R. RENDTORFF, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup 89; Sheffield 1990) 86; SKA, "La place d'Ex 6,2-8", 545. Note that Knohl assigns Exod 6,2-8 to HS (Holiness School), which is later than his PT (Priestly Torah): I. KNOHL, *The Sanctuary of Silence. The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis, MN 1995) 17 n. 24.

¹² See J.C. GERTZ – K. SCHMID – M. WITTE (eds.), *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (BZAW 315; Berlin 2002); DOZEMAN – SCHMID, *A Farewell to the Yahwist?*.

¹³ SCHMID, "So-Called Yahwist", 42.

that Exod 6,3 was meant to be a mere editorial harmonization. Granted, editorial features are not limited to the work of a redactor but can also be part of any author's literary arsenal to maintain a coherent storyline ¹⁴. Thus, the point here is not whether P is an author or redactor but how much weight one should give to this editorial device. Even if one takes P as a source, not all of its constituent parts play an equal role in revealing the author's theology, especially when the underlying traditions are acknowledged. To what extent can we state that the divine appellations in the three segments of P were chosen and arranged on purpose by P instead of being the vestiges of the underlying traditions?

IV. EXOD 6,3 AND PRIESTLY PERIODIZATION

There is no way to get into P's mind, and so there is no definitive way to prove or disprove P's intentions. However, one can examine how deeply and organically the system of periodization is implemented in the text. P is well-known for systematic thoughts. If one could be certain that the choice of the divine names originated with P's theology, one would expect that P would have devised a well-designed system deeply rooted in the text in order to realize that purpose. If that is not the case, then it would be a mistake to hang too much on a feature that lies only on the surface of the text.

1. *Between narration and discourse*

Exod 6,3 says that the name YHWH was not revealed to the patriarchs who knew their God only by the name of El-Shadday. It is true that this comment rejects a prior knowledge of the name YHWH, and that it may function as a device to implement an epochal division ¹⁵. However, when we scrutinize it, this comment appears to have been overinterpreted.

It is necessary to consider how P employed the divine names prior to this moment, and to determine whether P distinguishes between discourse and narration. While the meaning and significance of the newly revealed name YHWH are presented in direct discourse between YHWH and Moses, the way YHWH was avoided in P prior to this scene makes one wonder if the choices of Elohim and El-Shadday were motivated by P's aim to

¹⁴ See J. VAN SETERS, "The Report of the Yahwist's Demise has been Greatly Exaggerated!", *A Farewell to the Yahwist?*, 143-157, esp. 151.

¹⁵ HONG, "Elohim", 325-327.

set up periodization in his narrative. The theory of periodization assumes that the Priestly author employed divine names and epithets in accordance with the degree of the people's awareness of the deity. Hence, the narrative characters choose the generic title Elohim because they have not yet learned the name YHWH. But in the text, it is not only Adam, Eve, and Noah who avoid using the name YHWH. The Priestly narrator also consistently avoids using the name before Exodus 6. One may want to downplay this, given that YHWH was also avoided in direct discourse by the characters, but there is some benefit to thinking through this issue. If P's choice of Elohim and El-Shadday was to avoid an anachronistic use of YHWH, that matter is limited within the narrated world to the perception of the characters¹⁶. Technically, the narrator is not bound by this principle and thus could use YHWH so long as the name is not part of the discourse among narrative characters¹⁷. Both P and P's audience know well that the God in the text refers to YHWH, whichever epithet is employed by the characters within the story. Norman Whybray has correctly pointed out:

Since both the authors of E and P and their readers would themselves have been familiar with the name Yahweh, there is no reason why these writers should not from the very outset have used this proper name of God except when quoting the words of their characters¹⁸.

Indeed, there is no obvious reason why the Priestly narrator would employ the divine name only in accordance with the perception of the characters in the narrative rather than that of his audience. Suppose how much religious literature of other faiths might begin with a generic title instead of the proper name of their own deity only because the writers believed their God's real name was unknown to the earliest believers in the narrative.

¹⁶ J.L. SKA, "De la relative indépendance de l'écrit sacerdotal", *Bib* 76 (1995) 396-415, esp. 412; K. SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*. Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible (Siphut 3; Winona Lake, IN 2010) 82.

¹⁷ Moberly has promoted a new solution that the use of YHWH in pre-P Genesis conveys the perspective of the narrator, not the characters through whom the underlying materials have been updated. Moberly's idea is opposed to the notion of progressive revelation in that the Yahwistic storyteller did not care about the resulting anachronism of using YHWH in his discourse before its revelation in the narrative: R.W.L. MOBERLY, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*. Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism (Minneapolis, MN 1992) 70. This idea was taken up and refined by L. ESLINGER, "Exod 6:3 in the Context of Genesis 1 – Exodus 15", *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (eds. L.J. DE REGT – J. DE WAARD – J.P. FOKKELMAN) (Winona Lake, IN 1996) 188-198, esp. 190, 192.

¹⁸ R.N. WHYBRAY, *The Making of the Pentateuch*. A Methodological Study (JSOTSup 53; Sheffield 1987) 64-65. A few others have made a similar point but only in passing; see, e.g., SEITZ, "The Call of Moses", 149; SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*, 82.

One may complain that I am asking too much precision of an ancient writer. However, such precision is precisely what some of the critics claim to have found in regard to P's periodization. If one is willing to accept that P was meticulous enough to set up three epochs in accordance with the Israelites' evolving knowledge of their God, it is only natural to expect P to maintain precision in related matters. In fact, there is evidence that P is well aware of this distinction. A string of P passages makes a consistent distinction between narration and discourse when employing divine names¹⁹, and it is no accident that they all belong to the Priestly El-Shadday layer. When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob address their God in direct discourse, P puts El-Shadday in the mouths of all of the characters — including God — whereas Elohim (or YHWH in Gen 17,1²⁰) is used in the narration. This shows that P was aware of the difference between narration and discourse, but the distinction is applied only within the El-Shadday layer, the very cross-references that are responsible for producing the sense of periodization²¹. This raises questions about the extent of the alleged system in P, which I shall discuss further below.

2. *Belated timing and imprecise level of communication*

This makes us question how effectively the comment in Exod 6,3 constructs the sense of periodization. The first issue is the timing of the verse. If P's intention was to avoid anachronistic use of YHWH before its revelation, merely refraining from putting the name YHWH in the mouths of the characters would have sufficed, and all the more so if a simple, timely

¹⁹ This distinction of narration and discourse, while not widely attested in Genesis, does appear to be evident in some of the non-P text, though critics barely pay attention to it, in which the use of YHWH seems to have been avoided in direct discourse in favor of a generic Elohim (e.g., Gen 2,4b – 3,24; 9,18-29; 39,9). For a detailed analysis, see my study, "A Descriptive Analysis of the Use of Divine Names in Genesis", *Journal of Korean Society of the Old Testament* 58 (2015) 10-39 [Korean].

²⁰ Scholars have often noted this unusual use of YHWH in P, but they tend to defend it by stressing that it appears on the level of narration; see, e.g., SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*, 82 nn. 200, 202; SEITZ, "The Call of Moses", 157 n. 13; SCHMID, "So-Called Yahwist", 41-42; BADEN, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 112; T. RÖMER, "The Revelation of the Divine Name to Moses and the Construction of a Memory About the Origins of the Encounter Between YHWH and Israel", *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective*. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience (eds. T.E. LEVY – T. SCHNEIDER – W.H. PROPP) (Cham 2015) 305-315, esp. 311 n. 7. Since YHWH is used in narration, it is argued, this appearance does not necessarily contradict the theory of progressive revelation. This is true but only partially. The full implication is that P had no categorical reason to avoid using YHWH in narration.

²¹ This layer echoes Exod 6,2-8 and thereby establishes a tight connection between the ancestral and Exodus traditions. But it remains unclear when and by whom this layer has been devised and inserted, what its original function was, and even why and how El-Shadday was chosen over against other titles.

comment had been provided that the patriarchs did not yet know God by the name revealed to Moses. Indeed, one may take the comment in Exod 6,3 as an attempt at providing this kind of harmonization. While this may be true, the comment is heavily delayed, which in turn does not give support to P's intentional design of periodization²². P could have commented in an earlier passage such as Genesis 17 — the first time God appears as El-Shadday — that Abraham did not know the name YHWH²³. If a tripartite division was central to P's worldview, did P have a reason to codify and hide the system until the name YHWH is finally revealed? As noted above, biblical narrators often employ corrective comments (e.g., Gen 23,2,19; 28,19), and when they do, these comments are provided at the moment they are needed. Immediately after Kiriath-arba and Mamre are mentioned, for example, the narrator informs the reader that they refer to Hebron, and immediately after Bethel is mentioned the narrator relates it to Luz. In Genesis 17, no attempt is made to inform the readers that Abraham has come to know God by a new name, creating an abrupt transition from the era of Elohim to that of El-Shadday. No attempt is made to explain why Abraham invokes the name El-Shadday instead of YHWH either, or to address any potential confusion on the part of readers who would be accustomed to using YHWH. The readers must wait until the revelation of the name YHWH in Exodus 6 for any comment on the changed use of divine names.

When we come to Exod 6,3, however, God reports the information directly to Moses, rather than communicating to the readers. This is not the most natural way of establishing a system of periodization. Unlike the initial self-identification, this comment of the prior knowledge of YHWH should matter more to the readers whose acquaintance with El-Shadday in the previous section is to be now harmonized with the new era of YHWH. Instead, the communicative level is set within the narrated world. The effect is more than just anticlimactic. If P's intention was to establish an epochal division by this comment, or to harmonize tradition blocks, as my alternative interpretation suggests, the narrator simply chose the wrong level. When biblical narrators provide information like this, as we mentioned a few cases above, they do so outside the narrated world by addressing the readers directly, "breaking the fourth wall", to borrow a theatrical term. In such cases, non-*wayyiqtol* forms, like *we-X-qatal*, are customarily used²⁴. For instance, in Gen 28,19, the narrator informs the

²² Cf. K. KOCH, "P — Kein Redaktor", VT 37 (1987) 446-467, here 464.

²³ See TOBOLOWSKY, *The Sons of Jacob*, 126.

²⁴ R.E. LONGACRE, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence. A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake, IN ² 2003).

readers: "He called that place Bethel; by the way, the name of the city was Luz at first". A similar comment would have made better sense in Exod 6,3 such as, "By the way, YHWH did not reveal himself using this name but was known as El-Shadday beforehand".

Of course, one may argue that P did intend this comment to Moses ²⁵, but this option has its own challenges. If the comment was intended for Moses, one would expect some use to be made of the information given to him. Yet it is unclear what it meant to Moses to learn that the patriarchs did not know the name of YHWH as he did. It would have made better sense if Moses had been aware of El-Shadday as his ancestral deity, but the extent of his knowledge prior to this incident is not made clear in the text. Furthermore, he never uses this knowledge of his ancestral deity to bolster his standing when he later faces his fellow Israelites. We do not even know what the state of understanding of their God was among the Hebrew slaves. The name El-Shadday simply never appears again for the rest of the Exodus narrative.

Though no definitive conclusion can be drawn here, given the complex state of the matter ²⁶, the question remains whether this untimely and imprecise comment in Exod 6,3 can bear the weight of the grandiose system that critical scholarship has placed upon it. Had P intended to

²⁵ Several scholars have taken this position and interpreted Exod 6,3 not as an indication of the lack of the knowledge of YHWH but of a qualitative difference of YHWH's revelation to the Exodus generation. Naturally, these scholars do not take Exod 6,2-8 as the first revelation of YHWH. By telling this to Moses, YHWH is reassuring his disheartened agent; see, e.g., LOHFINK, "Die priesterschriftliche Abwertung", 4; SEITZ, "The Call of Moses", 159; UTZSCHNEIDER – OSWALD, *Exodus 1–15*, 159. Not incidentally, this coincides with the "aspectual" interpretation that was common in the pre-critical era, when exegetes struggled with the question of how to understand Exod 6,3 in relation to the use of YHWH throughout Genesis; see CASSUTO, *Exodus*, 78-79; JACOB, *Exodus*, 145-146. For a brief review of the history of research, see CHILDS, *Exodus*, 112-113. However, this line of interpretation has often led into the unintended consequence of downplaying the import of the ancestral era to the Exodus era. Perhaps the most fanciful interpretation of this kind comes from DOZEMAN (*Exodus*, 166-167), who argues that the name change to YHWH signifies the reversal of the theme in Genesis. This time it is God who undergoes a name change, not his human counterpart (cf. Abram and Jacob). He thinks this reversal signifies the magnitude of Israel's oppression in Egypt that required "a new dimension of the Deity". Dozeman thus concludes, "El Shaddai must become Yahweh in order to fulfill the covenant promises to the ancestors" (DOZEMAN, *Exodus*, 166). Although one can understand that the unprecedented magnitude of God's salvific power is highlighted in the context of the Exodus tradition, one must also question whether this emphasis was intended to be set against the ancestral period. There appears no reason for P to downplay the era of Abraham, the holder of the *bērit 'ôlām*, a covenant central to the Priestly theology. Cf. LOHFINK, "Die priesterschriftliche Abwertung", 8, and BLUM, *Studien zur Komposition*, 236.

²⁶ Personally, I prefer to take this comment as a harmonizing device that coordinates the two traditions, but is inaccurately applied to the narrative world. I can only conjecture that the narrator may not have wanted to interrupt YHWH's announcement with a comment like this.

implement the tripartite division, and if that was central to P's theology as scholars see it, a far more effective system could have been devised, with a timely comment earlier in the narrative providing necessary information to the readers.

3. *Limited scope*

Against this backdrop, it is important to recognize that the back reference established by Exod 6,2-8 extends only to the ancestral tradition, which scholars have rarely pointed out ²⁷. As noted above, Exod 6,2-8 connects back to Genesis, but none of those allusions refers to the primeval history and its use of Elohim. The primeval history, the first of P's alleged periods, is entirely left out ²⁸. We also noticed above that P's distinction between narration and discourse is maintained only within the El-Shadday layer. Strictly speaking, the principle of progressive revelation may apply within the El-Shadday layer, which spans the ancestral and Exodus traditions ²⁹. The supposition that the primeval history used Elohim due to Adam, Eve, and Noah's ignorance of the names El-Shadday and YHWH is made entirely out of a scholarly inference. If so, the idea that Exod 6,3 was meant to establish a tripartite division, including the primeval history, is further undermined. It appears to fit better as a harmonizing device — between the ancestral and Exodus traditions.

This may carry further implications for the use of Elohim in the primeval history. I earlier argued that the use of Elohim in the traditional E text could be explained as part of the late Elohim phenomenon ³⁰. As I hinted above, this phenomenon applies well to P as well. If this is the case, that means that one can explain P's employment of Elohim in the primeval history through reasons unrelated to the notion of progressive revelation anchored by Exod 6,3. In this regard, A. de Pury may have a point when

²⁷ Cf. JACOB, *Exodus*, 145-146.

²⁸ Granted, one may explain this by the narrative economy, arguing that allusions to creation is out of place in Exodus 6 and would distract the readers. And yet, one cannot discount the possibility that alluding to the creation motif could have served well in reassuring Moses (cf. Exodus 14).

²⁹ This requires us to rethink the significance of the transition established by this verse within P. It has been widely observed by source critics that after Exod 6,2-8, taken as a grand revelation of YHWH, a clear transition is made concerning the use of the divine names in that P then begins to employ YHWH consistently; see, e.g., HOUTMAN, *Exodus 1:1 – 7:13*, 93. From the source-critical point of view, this may be taken as a significant sign of periodization. However, seen from a redaction-critical point of view, the transition may be limited to the originally independent Exodus tradition that P combined with the ancestral tradition.

³⁰ See HONG, "Elohim", 336.

he draws attention to the significance of P's employment of the undefined Elohim as a designation of the creator of the universe. For him, this was a critical development towards the concept of "God" as moderns use it ³¹. Yet subsequent scholarship has been too quick to fit this observation into the scheme of P's periodization ³², when in fact what de Pury offers may be a very different explanation for P's employment of Elohim. De Pury's argument is almost entirely based on Genesis 1 and its Persian context, and thus it stands or falls irrespective of Exod 6,2-8 ³³. This point is well illustrated by the fact that a similar argument of "inclusive monotheism" has been put forward by Thomas Thompson, who approaches the issue outside the source-critical scheme ³⁴.

4. *Secondary nature*

Structural observation suggests that the comment at Exod 6,3 might be secondary to the context, which further undermines the centrality of the periodization to P's theology. I think Childs is correct to point out that "v. 3 appears almost as a parenthesis" ³⁵. Several critics have highlighted the structural coherence and unity of Exod 6,2-8, often with a tight chiasmic structure of this unit ³⁶. A closer look at the chiasmic structure, however, reveals the secondary nature of 6,3. Worthy of consideration is J. Magonet's structure, for instance ³⁷. The imbalance between 6,3-4 and 6,8abα undermines what is otherwise a highly symmetrical structure. Exod 6,8abα is about

³¹ A. DE PURY, "Gottesname, Gottesbezeichnung und Gottesbegriff: 'Elohim' als Indiz zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuch", *Abschied vom Jahwisten*. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion (eds. J.C. GERTZ – K. SCHMID – M. WITTE) (BZAW 315; Berlin 2002) 25-47.

³² See T. RÖMER, "The Exodus Narrative According to the Priestly Document", *The Strata of the Priestly Writing*. Contemporary Debate and Future Directions (eds. S. SHECTMAN – J.S. BADEN) (ATANT 95; Zürich 2009) 157-174, 162-163; IDEM, "The Revelation of the Divine Name", 312; BOORER, *The Vision of the Priestly Narrative*, 438 n. 571.

³³ DE PURY ("Gottesname", 36-38) may share some responsibility for this because he frames one of his arguments on the theory of progressive revelation.

³⁴ Of course, his observation is based also on the late Persian and Hellenistic context. See T. THOMPSON, "How Yahweh Became God: Exodus 3 and 6 and the Heart of the Pentateuch", *JSOT* 68 (1995) 57-74; IDEM, "The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative: Inclusive Monotheism in Persian Period Palestine", *The Triumph of Elohim*. From Yahwisms to Judaisms (ed. D.V. Edelman) (CBET 13; Kampen 1995) 107-124.

³⁵ CHILDS, *Exodus*, 113.

³⁶ See, for example, P. AUFFRET, "The Literary Structure of Exodus 6,2-8", *JSOT* 27 (1983) 46-54; J. MAGONET, "The Rhetoric of God: Exodus 6,2-8", *JSOT* 27 (1983) 56-67, 62-63. Cf. W.H. SCHMIDT, *Exodus 1,1 – 6,30* (BKAT 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988) 285-286; LUST, "Exodus 6,2-8 and Ezekiel", 211-214; SCHMID, *Genesis and the Moses Story*, 243; RÖMER, "The Exodus Narrative According to the Priestly Document", 161; BOORER, *The Vision of the Priestly Narrative*, 440; SURLS, *Making Sense of the Divine Name*, 87.

³⁷ MAGONET, "The Rhetoric of God", 58-59.

half the length and hardly includes information that matches 6,3. If 6,3 were taken out, on the other hand, with minimal adjustments to the text (replacing “them” with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), the flow is smoother, and its chiasmic structure is tighter, both in content and length, as follows ³⁸:

- A I am YHWH.
 [I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El-Shadday 6,3
 but by my name YHWH I did not make myself known to them.]
- B I established my covenant with them [*Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*] 6,4
 to give them the land of Canaan,
 the land in which they lived as sojourners.
- C Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel
 whom the Egyptians hold as slaves,
 and I have remembered my covenant.
- X Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am YHWH, 6,6
 And I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,
 and I will deliver you from slavery to them,
 and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of
 judgment.
- C’ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God,
 and you shall know that I am YHWH your God,
 who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
- B’ I will bring you into the land that I swore 6,8aba
 to give to *Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*.
 I will give it to you for a possession.
- A’ I am YHWH.

One should not make too much of this structural observation, but when corroborated with the foregoing observations, it does caution against placing too much weight on Exod 6,3. As noted, it is Exod 6,3 that gives a superficial look of a first revelation. If one takes out this verse, there remains little to indicate that this is a revelation of a new name or the establishment of a tripartite scheme ³⁹. The anchor of the structure is

³⁸ One may argue that the claim in v. 7 (“you shall know that I am YHWH your God”) requires v. 3. Yet the nature of the knowledge here is not necessarily informational. “You shall know that I am YHWH your God” can fit any context in which YHWH’s salvific power for Israel is to be demonstrated.

³⁹ Several scholars have noted that this episode could be read meaningfully within the present literary context, not as the first revelation account of P parallel to the non-P revelation account in Exodus 3–4; see, e.g., SKA, “La place d’Ex 6,2–8”, 545; M. GREENBERG, “The Thematic Unity of Exodus 3–11”, *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 4 (1967) 151–154; BLUM, *Studien zur Komposition*, 233; HOUTMAN, *Exodus 1:1 – 7:13*, 101–102, 487–488, 496–497; W.H. PROPP, *Exodus 1–18. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York 1999) 268; SEITZ, “The Call of Moses”, 158; D.K. STUART, *Exodus* (NAC 2; Nashville, TN 2006) 170 n. 165; UTZSCHNEIDER – OSWALD, *Exodus 1–15*, 159–162; SURLS, *Making Sense of the Divine Name*, 87–88.

Exod 6,6, in which YHWH pushes Moses to persevere despite Israel's complaints and reassures his disheartened agent by responding in style, "I am YHWH". This scene reads more likely as "a guarantee that the reality of God stands behind the promise and will execute its fulfilment" than as the account of a revelation of a new name ⁴⁰.

V. CONCLUSION

The impression of a tripartite division is left in the text, but the epochal division asserted by scholars is built upon an imprecise, untimely, and incomplete system. This does not mean P's periodization must be rejected, but it does warn against overinterpreting Exod 6,2-8 and asserting that periodization was an essential element of the Priestly theology. Among many forms of understanding P's periodization, this essay takes issue with the one that is firmly rooted in progressive revelation, as if the periodization is the product of P's intentional design that distributed divine names to fit the developing human knowledge of God. I have questioned whether Exod 6,2-8 betrays P's theology and guiding principle according to which divine appellations of all three segments of P have been systematically employed. If that were true, then, as I have pointed out, there were many different ways that the system could have been built much more effectively. The simpler explanation is that P inherited traditions that happened to employ different divine titles, and Exod 6,2-8 was part of P's structuring device that harmonized their differences. The use of YHWH may be an inherent feature of the original Exodus/Moses tradition. From the beginning of Exodus, God introduces himself as YHWH, and the name is used throughout the book ⁴¹. The prevalence of Elohim in the primeval history, on the other hand, may have originated with a factor unrelated to the principle found in Exod 6,3, perhaps in line with the late Elohim phenomenon. Most difficult to explain is the use of El-Shadday in the ancestral tradition. Whether P found El-Shadday in the inherited tradition or consciously chose it as a means of bridging the two tradition blocks, one cannot tell with certainty. Not incidentally, the ancestral segment is the most contested part within the debate on the nature of P. In all, this explanation makes the tripartite use of divine appellations in P more complex and certainly less

⁴⁰ Childs, *Exodus*, 115. See also JACOB, *Exodus*, 145.

⁴¹ Granted, there is a transition from Elohim to YHWH within the Priestly Exodus narrative around Exodus 6, but one may view this within the scope of the originally independent Exodus tradition, not necessarily against the ancestral tradition.

fashionable, but it helps us remain more faithful to the textual evidence and to keep away from the modern prejudice in favor of a neat evolutionary scheme ⁴².

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SUMMARY

This essay investigates the nature of P's periodization by studying afresh Exod 6,2-8. While many overinterpret the text as if P intentionally designed the tripartite division in accordance with the notion of progressive revelation, the editorial function of Exod 6,2-8 is highlighted, together with its limited scope and the lack of a systematic design. The simpler explanation is that the tripartite division may be the product of P's combination of discrete traditions, in which Exod 6,2-8 played a major role.

⁴² This research was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2018S1A5A2A01037647).

COMPLETION PHRASEOLOGY IN THE SOLOMON NARRATIVE AND IN MESOPOTAMIAN ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS

Biblical redactors employed specific phraseology to express the concept that a building was completed. These completion formulas and phrases have often been overlooked in recent commentaries. A closer reading of the Solomon narrative shows that Hebrew and Greek manuscripts contain various types of completion formulas and located them in different places. Hence, I start with exploring a typology of completion phraseology. The comparison of completion formulas and the division of the completion formula into three groups allow me to approach a more complex question: What is the role of the completion formulas in the biblical texts? Since the narrative and rhetorical analysis should examine a concrete text, I intentionally have chosen the four most representative manuscripts. Thus, this paper analyses the role of the completion formulas in the Masoretic text of the *Codex Leningradensis* (MT), the *Codex Vaticanus* (G^B)¹, the Antiochian text (G^{Ant.})², and the *Codex Alexandrinus* (G^A)³. The presence and absence of the completion formulas points to different narrative and rhetorical strategies in the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Solomon narrative⁴. The different strategies leave us with unanswered questions: Are these formulas pure literary devices invented by the Israelite scribes? Can we reconstruct the original Urtext? Even though the primary goal of this article is not to discuss the textual history of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts nor to reconstruct the Old Greek nor to address the complex discussion regarding the pre-Masoretic and proto-Masoretic text, these questions

¹ Cf. A.E. BROOKE – N.M.A. McLEAN – H.J. THACKERAY, *I and II Kings*, vol. II/II (The Old Testament in Greek According to the Text of Codex Vaticanus, Supplemented from Other Uncial Manuscripts, with a Critical Apparatus Containing the Variants of the Chief Ancient Authorities for the Text of the Septuagint; Cambridge 1930). When referring to biblical manuscripts, I will use the siglas proposed in this book.

² Cf. N.F. MARCOS – J.R. BUSTO SAIY, *El Texto antioqueno de la Biblia Griega: 1–2 Reyes*, vol. II (Madrid 1992).

³ Cf. the edition of J.J. BREITINGER – J.E. GRABE, *Vetus Testamentum ex Versione Septuaginta Interpretum Olim ad Fidem Codicis Ms. Alexandrini* (Tiguri Helvetiorum 1730).

⁴ For a more detailed methodological introduction into the relation between the textual history and the rhetorical analysis of the Hebrew and Greek versions of 1–2 Kings and 3–4 Kingdoms, see the author's forthcoming article in *New Avenues in Biblical Exegesis in Light of the LXX* (eds. L. PESSOA – D. SCIALABBA) (The Septuagint in its Ancient Context; Turnhout 2022).

inevitably lead my research to a diachronic analysis ⁵. The examination of similar formulas occurring in the ANE inscriptions allows me to formulate a hypothesis on the cultic origin of the completion formulas and their reception in Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

I. TYPOLOGY OF COMPLETION PHRASEOLOGY

A characteristic feature of the completion formulas in the MT is the occurrence of the verbs **כלה** and **בנה**. An examination of these verbs allows us to divide the completion formulas into three groups ⁶. A clearly distinguishable completion formula ⁷ (Type I) is “(Solomon) built (**ויבן**) the temple and completed it (**ויכלהו**)” ⁸. This formula occurs in 1 Kgs 6,9a.14 and both verbs are in *wayyiqtol*. Type II formulas occur in 1 Kgs 3,1 (**עד כלתו לבנות**) and 9,1 (**ויהי ככלות שלמה לבנות**). Both verbs are in infinitive construct. Finally, there are partial formulas in 1 Kgs 6,1 and 6,37-38 (referring to the completion of the temple), in 7,1 (the completion of Solomon’s palace), in 7,22 (the completion of the pillars), and in 7,40 (the completion of vessels), which are labeled as Type III in this paper ⁹.

1. Completion formula of Type I

Table 1 presents manuscripts containing the completion formula of Type I:

<i>MT (1 Kgs)</i>	<i>G^{B.Ant.} (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^A (3 Kgdms)</i>
	6,8	6,3d
6,9a	6,14a	6,9a
6,14		6,14

Table 1: Occurrences of the Type I completion formula.

⁵ For a helpful introduction to these problems and a good bibliography, see articles in *THB* 1B, 301-453.

⁶ J. Walsh noticed the importance of the completion formulas for the structure of the temple-palace building account; however, he did not distinguish among different types of formulas and their role: J.T. WALSH, *1 Kings* (Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry; Collegeville, MN 1996) 103.

⁷ I call this phrase a formula. The technical term “formula” refers to a short literary genre whose common feature is linguistic similarity. A formula is often fixed and stereotyped; see G.M. TUCKER, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA 1971) 14. While the formulas of Type I match the definition of the literary critics, the formulas of Type II and III are not formulas in the strict sense of the word. The formulas of Type II and III represent stylistic and gramatical variants that share the verbs “to build” and “to complete” and are applied to buildings.

⁸ All translations are my own.

⁹ J. GRAY, *I & II Kings*. A Commentary (Old Testament Library; London 1976) 150; M. NOBILE, *I–2 Re* (I Libri Biblici, Primo Testamento; Milano 2010) 102-103.

Based on this list four conclusions can be drawn. First, all Greek manuscripts ¹⁰, but no Hebrew manuscripts, locate the Type I formula at the end of 3 Kgdms 6,8 in the G^{B,Ant.} (cf. 1 Kgs 6,3) ¹¹. Second, all Hebrew and Greek manuscripts have the formula in 1 Kgs 6,9a (3 Kgdms 6,14a in the G^{B,Ant.}) ¹². Third, the MT and some Greek manuscripts ¹³ locate the formula in 1 Kgs 6,14/3 Kgdms 16,14 in the G^A. Third, contrary to Type II and III formulas, the Type I formula occurs exclusively in the temple building account (1 Kings 6/3 Kingdoms 6). Finally, some Greek manuscripts, namely G^A ¹⁴, harmonize the MT and the G^{B,Ant.} and as a result there are three Type I formulas.

1.1. Functions of the Type I Completion formula in the MT

Type I formulas divide the temple narrative into minor units. Thus, the location of the Type I completion formula indicates which elements should be grouped together. Accordingly, we have three ways to group the architectural elements of the temple (the formula is in bold) ¹⁵:

MT	6,2-8. 9a .9b-13. 14 .15-36
G ^{B,Ant.}	6,6-7. 8 .9-13. 14a .14b-34
G ^A	6,2-3c. 3d .4-8. 9a .9b-13. 14 .15-36

In the MT the Type I formula appears for the first time in 1 Kgs 6,9a. Even though some scholars believe that the formula in 6,9a is out of place ¹⁶, it seems that the formula serves to separate the work in stone from the work in wood, since wood is mentioned for the first time in 1 Kgs 6,9b just after the first occurrence of the formula. This observation by J. Walsh ¹⁷ should be further nuanced. Before the first formula (1 Kgs 6,9), the building material is stone. Between the first and the second formula (1 Kgs 6,9.14), the building materials are wood and probably also stone (the supporting

¹⁰ Except minuscule 236.

¹¹ Manuscript 44 omits and changes some words, but the formula is preserved.

¹² Minuscule i (56 in Rahlfs) and x (247 in Rahlfs) insert the formulas at the equivalent of 1 Kgs 6,3.14 and thus created a unit 6,4-14 that does not exist in other manuscripts.

¹³ Manuscripts AMNd-gjnpyzAS 44, 64, 74, 242, 244.

¹⁴ Cf. also manuscripts MNd-gjnpxyzAS 44, 64, 74, 242, 244. The Greek texts in these manuscripts contain several different readings that will not be studied in this paper.

¹⁵ An exception is manuscript ix that divides the narrative in 3 Kgdms 6,2-3c.3d.4-13.14.15-36. Since this manuscript is of minor value, this option is not discussed in this paper.

¹⁶ For the discussion of this issue, see R. KITTEL – W. NOWACK, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Göttingen 1900) 48; D.W. GODDING, "Temple Specifications: A Dispute in Logical Arrangement between the Mt and the Lxx," *VT* 17 (1967) 146-152; E. WÜRTHWEIN, *Das Erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1–16* (ATD 11.1; Göttingen 1977) 64; V.O. FRITZ, *1 & 2 Kings* (Continental Commentaries; Philadelphia, PA 2003) 72.

¹⁷ WALSH, *1 Kings*, 103.

structure). After the second formula (1 Kgs 6,14), the building materials are wood and precious metals, but stone is not mentioned.

Beside the type of building material, the Type I formula points out how the parts of the temple should be grouped together. The MT puts the windows together with the surrounding structures¹⁸. Consequently, the first formula groups together all of the exterior elements — the general layout, porch, windows, walls, and surrounding structures (1 Kgs 6,2-8)¹⁹.

The second formula appears in the MT in 1 Kgs 6,14. This formula performs two different functions in the narrative. It closes God's direct speech (1 Kgs 6,11-13), and, at the same time, as M. Cogan and H. Tadmor observe, the double completion formula (1 Kgs 6,9,14) forms a *Wiederaufnahme* separating the unit describing the outer shell of the temple (1 Kgs 6,2-8) from the unit describing the construction of its interior (1 Kgs 6,15-35)²⁰. Their proposal can be further developed. The *Wiederaufnahme* creates a space for inserting a theological comment (6,11-13) in addition to listing three building activities, namely the construction of the roof²¹, the supporting structures around the whole temple, and the paneling of the walls with cedar wood (1 Kgs 6,9b-10). These three building activities focus on the completion of the external shell of the temple. Putting these observations together we can conclude that the MT divides the temple architecture into three groups:

- (1) The construction of the external shell: outline, porch, windows, walls, and surrounding structures (1 Kgs 6,2-8); *stonework*.
- (2) The completing of the external shell: the roof, supporting structures, and fastening the temple with cedar wood (1 Kgs 6,9b-10); *stonework and woodwork*.
- (3) The interior and the decoration of the temple (1 Kgs 6,15-38); *woodwork and precious metalwork*.

¹⁸ For discussion of the temple windows, see J. LUST, "Solomon's Temple According to 1 Kings 6,3-14 in Hebrew and in Greek," in *After Qumran*. Old and Modern Editions of the Biblical Texts — the Historical Books (eds. H. AUSLOOS – B. LEMMELIN – J.C. TREBOLLE BARRERA) (Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2012) 273.

¹⁹ For a similar proposal, see S. GAROFALO, *Il Libro dei Re* (Roma 1951) 60-68; J.A. MONTGOMERY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC; Edinburgh 1951) 143-159; GRAY, *I & II Kings*, 150-166.

²⁰ Cf. M. COGAN, *I Kings*. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 10; New York 2001) 240.

²¹ The difficult expression גִּבִּית אֶת הַיֶּסֶפֶן is interpreted as a construction of the roof by GRAY, *I & II Kings*, 156; COGAN, *I Kings*, 240; however, other interpretations have been proposed by M.J. MULDER, *I Kings* (HCOT; Leuven 1998) 248-250.

1.2. Functions of the Type I Completion formula in the Greek manuscripts

Table 1 shows that the $G^{B,Ant.}$ divide the temple into three groups, as does the MT, yet the groups are different. The Type I completion formula is inserted after 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,8 (cf. 1 Kgs 6,3). However, the $G^{B,Ant.}$ have a description of the foundations in 3 Kgdms 6,2-5 that does not occur in the MT nor in the G^A . Thus, the Type I formula in the $G^{B,Ant.}$ groups together the foundations, general outline of the temple, and the *ailam* (3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,6-7). The second formula is in 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,14 (cf. 1 Kgs 6,8). These two formulas create a space for the description of building activities that concern the external shell of the temple: windows, walls, roof-beams, rib-structures around the temple, and stonework (3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,9-13). After the second completion formula the text describes the construction of bonds and bondings, the interior of the temple, and its decoration (6,14b-34²²). In the same way, the MT, the $G^{B,Ant.}$ distinguish the type of material used for the construction of the building. Before the first formula (3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,8), the text mentions only large stone blocks used for the foundations. The verses 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,9-13 mentions stones and wood, and the final section (3 Kgdms^B 6,14b-34/ 3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 6,14b-36) mention wood and precious metals. Putting these observations together we can conclude that the $G^{B,Ant.}$ divide the temple in three sections:

- (1) The fundamental parts of the temple: foundations, outline, and porch (6,2-7); *large foundation stone blocks*,
- (2) The exterior shell: walls, windows, roof, and rib-structures around the temple (6,9-13); *stone and wood*,
- (3) The additional building activities: fixing the temple, interior, and decoration (6,14b-34^B/36^{Ant.}); *wood and precious metals*.

Finally, Table 1 shows that the G^A and other manuscripts have three formulas, instead of two. Like the MT, the G^A does not have the description of the foundation of the temple. In this way the temple architecture is divided into four groups:

- (1) Essential parts of the temple: outline and porch (3 Kgdms^A 6,2-3c),
- (2) Exterior of the temple: walls, windows, roof-beams, and rib-structure around the temple (3 Kgdms^A 6,4-8),

²² J. LUST ("Solomon's Temple," 273) discusses the different grouping caused by the insertion of the formula at the end of verse 3. He suggested that the position of the windows is at the right place following the completion formula in the G^B , because they are the features pertaining to the temple walls.

- (3) The completion of the exterior of the temple: roof and bondings (3 Kgdms^A 6,10-13),
- (4) The completion of the interior of the temple: interior and decoration (3 Kgdms^A 6,15-35).

2. Completion formula of Type II

It is the syntax that distinguishes the completion formula of Type I from that of Type II. While the completion formula of Type I has both verbs בנה and כלה in wayyiqtol, the formula of Type II has the verbs in infinitive construct. As a result, the completion formula of Type II is a part of a temporal clause. Moreover, this formula refers to the completion of both the temple and the palace. Similar formulas occur also in the Greek manuscripts as shown in Table 2:

MT (1 Kgs)	G ^B (3 Kgdms)	G ^{Ant.} (3 Kgdms)	G ^A (3 Kgdms)
		2,3	
3,1			3,1
		5,1	
	8,1	8,1	
	8,53a	8,53	8,53
9,1	9,1	9,1	9,1

Table 2: Occurrences of the Type II completion formula.

2.1. Functions of the Type II Completion formula in the MT

While the Type I formula functioned as a marker dividing the temple narrative in 1 Kings 6 into smaller units, the Type II formula is incorporated in the introductory paragraphs that open Solomon’s first and second dreams (1 Kings 3 and 9), which are built as parallel chapters ²³. Solomon’s dream is central to both chapters. To buttress scholarly consensus, we can add some additional elements that point out an editorial intention to link these two chapters:

Appearance (root ראה)	3,5	9,2
Conversation with the Lord in a dream	3,5-15	9,3-10
Gibeon	3,5	9,2
Pharaoh and Solomon	3,1	9,16

²³ B.O. LONG, *1 Kings*. With an Introduction to Historical Literature (FOTL 9; Grand Rapids, MI 1984) 57-60.

Pharaoh's daughter	3,1	9,16.24
The city of David	3,1	9,24
Sacrifices	3,2	9,25

Besides these elements there are other intertextual links between larger units, namely between 1 Kings 3–5 and 1 Kings 9–10:

Solomon's administration	4,1-19	9,23
Bringing tribute and supplying the court	4,7; 5,2-8	10,14-21
Solomon's wisdom	5,9-14	10,1-10
Hiram	5,15-26	9,11-14.26-28; 10,11
Solomon's force labor	5,28-32	9,15.20-22

Even though there are many differences between 1 Kings 3–5 and 9–10, the elements listed above suggest that the final redactor made a great effort to link both narrative blocks ²⁴. Thus, the completion formula of Type II functions in the MT as one of several elements that link the narrative blocks of 1 Kings 3–5 and 1 Kings 9–10. The meaning of these links is to frame the temple building account (1 Kings 6–8).

2.2. Functions of the Type II Completion formula in the Greek manuscripts

The Type II formula is rendered in Greek ὡς συνετέλεσεν Σαλωμων οἰκοδομεῖν/οἰκοδομησαι. The G^A, alike the MT, has the formula in 3,1 and 9,1 and thus maintains its role as a narrative link between the blocks 3 Kingdoms 3–5 and 9–10. However, the link between 3,1 and 9,1 is absent in the G^{B,Ant.}.

Indeed, the differences in chapters eight and nine between the G^{B,Ant.} and the MT show that not only the content but also the structure is different. The G^B inserts the formula only after the construction of the temple (3 Kgdms 8,1.53a and 9,1). The formula thus introduces three narratives in the G^{B,Ant.}: Solomon's dedication of the temple (3 Kgdms 8,1-66), Solomon's quote (3 Kgdms 8,53a), and Solomon's second dream (3 Kgdms 9,1-9). The G^B reads ²⁵:

²⁴ For the role of Solomon's wisdom and administrative skills in the MT, see S.J. DEVRIES, *1 Kings* (WBC 12; Nashville, TN 2003) 47-50; K. BODNER, *The Theology of the Book of Kings* (Cambridge 2019) 57-65.

²⁵ The formula is omitted in ANvxΛ. While the G^B has the formulas that are almost identical, the G^{Ant.} has some minor variants:

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ συνετέλεσαι Σαλωμῶντα τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι τὸν οἶκον κυρίου καὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ (8,1).

Τότε ἐλάλησεν Σαλωμων ὑπὲρ τοῦ οἴκου, ὡς συνετέλεσεν τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτόν (8,53a).

Καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς συνετέλεσε Σαλωμων οἰκοδομῆσαι τὸν οἶκον κυρίου καὶ τὸν οἶκον βασιλέως (9,1).

Καὶ ἐγένετο ὥς συνετέλεσεν Σαλωμων τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι τὸν οἶκον κυρίου καὶ τὸν οἶκον ἑαυτοῦ (8,1) ²⁶

Τότε ἐλάλησεν Σαλωμων ὑπὲρ τοῦ οἴκου, ὥς συνετέλεσεν τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτόν (8,53a) ²⁷

Καὶ ἐγενήθη ὥς συνετέλεσεν Σαλωμων οἰκοδομεῖν τὸν οἶκον κυρίου καὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ βασιλέως (9,1) ²⁸

The verbatim repetition of Καὶ ἐγένετο ὥς συνετέλεσεν Σαλωμων and the reference to both Solomon's palace and temple in 8,1 and 9,1 distinguish this formula from that in 8,53a. In fact, the formula in 8,53a refers only to the temple and is linked with verse 8,54:

Τότε ἐλάλησεν Σαλωμων ὑπὲρ τοῦ οἴκου, ὥς συνετέλεσεν τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτόν (8,53a)

Quote from the Book of the Song

Καὶ ἐγένετο ὥς συνετέλεσεν Σαλωμων προσευχόμενος πρὸς κύριον (8,54) ²⁹

The repetition of the expression ὥς συνετέλεσεν functions as *Wiederaufnahme* and creates a narrative space allowing the redactors to quote the Book of the Song in the midst of the dedication ceremony. The formula in 8,53a and its resumption in 8,54 separates the quotation in 8,53b from the rest of the narrative, but does not introduce another narrative ³⁰.

Moreover, links between 8,1 and 9,1 in the G^{B,Ant.} suggest that the dedication ceremony and the second dream have a similar narrative function. If so, then the consecration and completion of the temple had three stages in the G^{B,Ant.}:

- (1) Solomon's prayer (8,1-52)
- (2) God's confirmation through the prophecy (8,53)
- (3) God's confirmation through the second dream (9,3-9).

In other words, the G^{B,Ant.} propose that the dedication of the temple was not completed without Solomon's second dream. The dream in fact represents God's response to Solomon's prayer and dedication ceremony.

²⁶ And it happened as Solomon completed building the house of the Lord and his own house [...].

²⁷ Then Solomon spoke concerning the house when he had completed building it.

²⁸ And it happened, when Solomon completed building the house of the Lord and the house of the king [...].

²⁹ And it happened when Solomon finished praying to the Lord [...].

³⁰ This interpretation is also buttressed by the G^A which has the resumption in 8,53 and 54 but does not have a formula in 8,1.

3. Completion formulas of Type III

While the formal elements, in particular, the syntax and the vocabulary, mark Type I and II formulas, this is not the case for Type III formulas. We will use Type III as an umbrella for all other completion notes ³¹. In other words, these completion notes, labeled as Type III completion formulas in this paper, contain one of the verbs or other expressions suggesting that an aspect of the construction of a building was completed. For practical reasons, these formulas are divided according to their function into three subcategories: sandwich, break, and hinge formulas.

3.1. Sandwich formulas

A particular type of completion formula represents a split formula that contains both roots בנה and כלה in 1 Kgs 6,1.37-38. Since one part of the formula occurs at the beginning and the other part of the formula is placed at the end of a narrative block, we label this rhetorical device a sandwich completion formula. Similar formulas also occur in the Greek manuscripts.

MT (1 Kgs)	G ^B (3 Kgdms)	G ^{Ant.} (3 Kgdms)	G ^A (3 Kgdms)	Bracketing
6,1.37-38			6,1.37-38	Temple building
		6,1.4		Foundations
	7,38.50	7,38.50		Palace

Table 3: Occurrences of the sandwich completion formula.

Temple in the MT

Examining the verbs employed by the scribes and editors in chapters 1 Kings 6 scholars notice the connections between 1 Kgs 6,1 and 6,37-38 ³²:

ויהי בשמונים שנה וארבע מאות שנה לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים בשנה הרביעית
בחדש זו הוא החדש השני למלך שלמה על ישראל ויבן הבית ליהוה (1 Kgs 6,1)

It happened in the 480th year (after) the sons of Israel went out from the land of Egypt, in the 4th year, in the month Ziv, that is the 2nd month, of King Solomon reigning over Israel, he built the temple for the Lord.

³¹ Even though we opted for the division Type I, II, and III formulas in this paper, the reader should keep in mind that Type III is very different from the other kinds of completion formulas. Another possible division might be: Category A (Type I and II formulas) and Category B (Type III formulas).

³² Cf. MONTGOMERY, *Books of Kings*, 143.

[Temple building account in verses 6,2-36]

בשנה הרביעית יסד בית יהוה בירח זו ובשנה האחת עשרה בירח בול הוא החדש
השמיני כלה הבית לכל דבריו ולכל משפטו ויבנהו שבע שנים (1 Kgs 6,37-38)

In the fourth year the temple of the Lord was founded, in the month of Ziv. In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, that is the eighth month, he completed the temple according to all its details and all its specifications. He built it in seven years.

The links between the opening and the closing part of the temple building account are constructed by means of time-information, namely, when the temple was built and how long the construction lasted. Besides these temporal indicators, the redactors also used the verbs typical for the completion formulas. 1 Kgs 6,1 and 6,38 can be considered a combination of Type I and II, for the verb **בנה** is in *wayyiqtol* (cf. Type I), but they are inserted into temporal clauses (cf. Type II). 1 Kgs 6,37-38 use three verbs, **יסד**, **בנה**, and **כלה**, which refer not only to building and completing the temple but also to laying the foundation of the temple³³. The verb **בנה** and the temporal indications supplied in 1 Kgs 6,1 open the temple building account. Verses 1 Kgs 6,37-38 repeat the verb **בנה** and add the verbs **יסד** and **כלה**, as well as other temporal indications. Thus the formulas in verses 1 Kgs 6,1 and 6,37-38 mark an *inclusion*, which frames the description of the temple building:

- A Opening part of the sandwich formula (1 Kgs 6,1)
- B Temple building account (1 Kgs 6,2-36)
- A' Closing part of the sandwich formula (1 Kgs 6,37-38)

Solomon's palace in the G^{B,Ant.}

A similar sandwich completion formula appears in the palace building account in 3 Kgdms 7,38.50 in the G^{B,Ant.}. The G^{B,Ant.} move the palace building account to the end of 3 Kingdoms 7, contrary to the MT and the G^A. Moving the palace building account to the end of the building narrative, the redactors used new narrative strategies to separate the palace account from the temple account. The G^{B,Ant.} open the palace building account with the verb *οἰκοδομέω* (3 Kgdms 7,38) and closes the account

³³ For a more detailed comparison between the MT and the Greek versions, see P.S.F. VAN KEULEN, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative. An Inquiry into the Relationship between MT 1 Kgs. 2-11 and Lxx 3 Reg. 2-11* (VTSupp 194; Leiden – Boston, MA 2005) 113-130. The author of this monograph advocates the priority of the MT over the Greek versions. Despite the important contribution of this study, the author did not study in depth the differences occurring in the Greek manuscripts, which means that Greek and Hebrew narratives need to be reevaluated.

with the verb συντελέω (3 Kgdms 7,50). On the contrary, the MT and the G^A have both בנה and כלה in verse 1 Kgs 7,1, and the last verses of the palace building account 7,10-12 do not have a completion formula (see below), whereas the G^{B,Ant.} have a sandwich completion formula that frames the palace building account (3 Kgdms 7,39-49):

³⁸And as for the house Solomon built (it) for himself ³⁴ in (his) 13^(th) year.
[Palace building account in vv. 39-49]

⁵⁰And Solomon completed his whole house.

Temple foundations in the G^{Ant.}

Another sandwich formula occurs in the description of the temple foundations in the G^{Ant.} (3 Kgdms 6,1-4). Only the first part of this section exists in the MT and in the G^A. Verse 6,1 in the G^{Ant.} has a temporal reference, as do other versions, and the verb οἰκοδομέω ³⁵ (*and he built the house for the Lord*). Verse 6,4 concludes with the verbs θεμελιόω and συντελέω ³⁶, which gives the G^{Ant.} a sandwich formula to frame the foundation building account. This narrative strategy not only puts emphasis on the foundation of the temple, which is missing in the MT, but also separates the foundations of the temple (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 6,2-3) from the rest of the temple account (6,5 – 7,37).

¹And it happened in the 480th year of the departure of the sons of Israel from Egypt, in the 4th year, in the 2nd month, when king Solomon was reigning over Israel, *and he built the house for the Lord*,

[Foundation building account]

⁴In the 4th year *he founded* the house of the Lord, in the 2nd month, in the month of Neiso. In the 11th year, in the month of Baad, this is the 8th month, the house *was completed* in all its plan and in all its arrangement.

3.2. Break formulas

Partial completion formulas are often employed in the building accounts to mark the completion of a certain building activity before the narrative moves to another one. Although the formula thus functions as a narrative break in the building account, it does not represent a complete stop in the narrative but usually signals a transition from one section to the other (Table 4).

³⁴ The G^{Ant.} reads the genitive “his house”.

³⁵ This part is missing in the G^B.

³⁶ This structure is only partially preserved in the G^B which does not have the verb οἰκοδομέω in verse 6,1.

<i>MT (1 Kgs)</i>	<i>G^B (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^{Ant.} (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^A (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>Old/new activity</i>
6,22 (תָּמַם)	6,21	6,21	6,21	Interior/cherubs
7,9 (merism)	7,46	7,46	7,9	Palace/courtyard
7,22 (תָּמַם)			7,22	Pillars/molten sea
7,40b (כָּלָה)	7,26b	7,26b	7,40b	Objects/pillars
7,51a (שָׁלַם)	7,37	7,37	7,51a	Construction/transfer
9,10				Miscellanea

Table 4: Occurrences of the break formulas.

The first break formula is inserted in the MT in 1 Kgs 6,22 (cf. 3 Kgdms 6,21 ³⁷). The MT has the verb תָּמַם “until (he had) finished the entire temple”. The G^{B, Ant., A} have the verb συντελέω, thus interpreting it as a partial completion formula. By introducing the break formula, the redactors separated the construction of the interior of the temple and the first set of decoration work from special temple objects (the second set of decoration work, the cherubs, and the doors) and the courtyard.

Another break in the narrative is introduced in the MT and the G^A after the long description of the pillars (7,15-22a). Verse 7,22b also employs the verb תָּמַם and reads “[t]he work of the pillars was finished”. The G^A translates the phrase with the verb τελειόω, not with συντελέω. In this case the break formula separates the description of the pillars from the long account of temple objects (molten sea, stands, lavers). This break is not in the G^{B, Ant.} that continues directly with the description of the temple objects and thus forming one larger unit (3 Kgdms^{B, Ant.} 7,3-26b).

A further break is introduced after a long description of the temple objects in 1 Kgs 7,40b employing the verb כָּלָה and reads, “Hiram completed doing all the work that he was doing for King Solomon in the temple of the Lord”. The G^A translates the phrase with the verb συντελέω. Thus, this break separates the temple objects (7,23-40a) from the second description of the temple pillars and another set of temple utensils (7,41-50).

Another break in the temple building account is in 1 Kgs 7,51a. The narrative uses the root שָׁלַם that marks the conclusion of the building account. Verse 7,51a concludes the bronze work that started in 7,13.

Similarly the root שָׁלַם occurs in 9,25 in the MT and G^A but not in the G^{B, Ant.}. It seems that the formula in 9,25 functions as both the sandwich

³⁷ This break formula is attested in all extant manuscripts.

formula and the break formula. The phrase “he finished the temple” separates the sacrifices Solomon conducted in the temple from the account of how he built and outfitted ships at Ezion Geber (9,26-27). The MT, thus, suggests that the temple was indeed finished only in ch. 9 after Solomon completed other constructions in his kingdom, which then made it possible to organize the system of sacrifices. Following the Mesopotamian pattern, the temple was not considered complete until the king began to offer sacrifice in it.

Besides the break formulas that contain the verbs *כלה* and *בנה*, there are two other completion formulas that also function as a break in the building accounts. The first formula is in 1 Kgs 7,9 and 3 Kgdms 7,46. The formula “from the foundation to the (roof) cornices” is a typical completion formula in the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions (cf. below) that describes the completion of a part or the whole of a building. The function of the formula in the MT/G^A and G^{B,Ant.} seems to be different. The MT and G^A have a triple merism (7,9):

⁹All these (edifices) were of choice stones hewn according to (exact) measures, sawed with saws
inside and out,
and from the foundation to the (roof) cornices,
and from the outside to the great courtyard.

The G^{B,Ant.} have a double merism (7,46):

All these (were) of costly stones carved at intervals on the inside
and from the foundation to the (roof) cornices
and from the outside into the great court.

The double merism separates the description of a series of buildings (Solomon’s palace, house of Lebanon, *ailams*, the palace of Solomon’s daughter) from the great courtyard. In this way the G^{B,Ant.} present the great courtyard as a separate construction that nevertheless belongs to the royal palace complex. The MT/G^A mention the temple in 1 Kgs 7,12b³⁸. This note is missing in the G^{B,Ant.}. Consequently, verses 7,10-12a become ambiguous and can refer to the temple or to the palace. If the former was the case, then the triple merism separated the palace complex from the temple complex.

Another break formula appears in the miscellanea in 1 Kgs 9,10.25. The MT starts with the phrase “At the end (*ויהי מקצה*) of twenty years, in which Solomon had built two houses, the temple of the Lord and the

³⁸ Cf. also manuscripts xAS.

house of the king” (1 Kgs 9,10). It separates Solomon’s second dream from the rest of the narrative ³⁹. However, the $G^{B,Ant.,A}$ omit the phrase “At the end (ויהי מקצה) of” and thus do not mark a break in the narrative.

3.3. Hinge/link formulas

There are several variants of the Type III completion formula whose primarily function was to establish narrative links between various parts of the Solomon narrative (cf. Table 5).

<i>MT (1 Kgs)</i>	<i>G^B (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^{Ant.} (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^A (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>Links</i>
	2,35c	2,3 (Type II)	2,35	Pharaoh’s daughter
	4,31-32	5,1 (Type II)		Pharaoh’s daughter
6,38 and 7,1			6,38 and 7,1	Temple/palace
7,51 9,25 ⁴⁰	7,37	7,37	7,51	Dedication of the temple

Table 5: Occurrences of the hinge completion formulas.

The completion formula of Type II establishes a link in the $G^{B,Ant.}$ between 3 Kgdms 8,1 and 9,1. This link presents the dedication of the temple and Solomon’s second dream as two equally important parts of God’s acceptance of the temple (cf. 2.3.2). This idea is further underlined by the occurrence of the Type III completion formula containing the verb שלם appearing in 1 Kgs 7,51 and 9,25. This indicates that according to the MT the temple was really completed only in 9,25, after temple sacrifices had been organized.

Temple-palace link

A hinge formula occurs in the MT that links 1 Kgs 6,38 and 7,1. Thus, the verbs בנה, and כלה link chapter 1 Kings 6, the construction of the temple, with 1 Kings 7, the construction of Solomon’s palace, forming a chiasmic structure.



³⁹ Two completion formulas in 1 Kgs 9,1 and 9,10 have also been interpreted as a frame completion formula by WALSH, *1 Kings*, 109.

⁴⁰ This formula occurs only in the MT.

Links to Pharaoh's daughter

The so-called miscellanea have been studied from different viewpoints⁴¹. The $G^{B,Ant.}$ have a higher concentration of the Type III⁴² formula in the pre-temple miscellanea (cf. 3 Kgdms^B 2,35c, g; 4,31-32). Besides the break formula in 3 Kgdms 2,35g (cf. 2.4.2), all other occurrences of the Type III completion formulas in the miscellanea are attached to the notes on the Pharaoh's daughter. These formulas address the religiously problematic presence of the Egyptian princess at Solomon's court and in the holy city of Jerusalem (Table 5).

<i>MT (1 Kgs)</i>	<i>G^B (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^{Ant.} (3 Kgdms)</i>	<i>G^A (3 Kgdms)</i>
	2,35c (yes; Type III)	2,3 (yes; Type II)	2,35 (yes; Type I, III)
	2,35f (no)	2,6 (no)	2,35 (no)
3,1 (yes; Type II)			3,1b (yes; Type II)
	4,31-32 (yes; Type III)	5,1 (yes; Type II)	
7,8 (no)	7,45 (no)	7,45 (no)	7,8 (no)
	9,9 (no)	9,9 (no)	9,9 (no)
9,11 (no)			9,11 (no)
9,16 (no)			9,16 (no)
9,24 (no)			9,24 (no)
11,1 (no)	11,1 (no)	11,1-2 (no)	11,1 (no)

Table 5: Pharaoh's daughter in the Solomon narrative.

The table indicates that the $G^{B,Ant.}$ and the MT have two different strategies in presenting the story of Pharaoh's daughter. Except for verse 3,1, the majority of references to Pharaoh's daughter are moved to the sections that follow the temple building account in the MT. This makes it appear that Pharaoh's daughter was brought to Jerusalem after the construction of the temple and other palaces. The organization of the chapters in the MT does not require introducing the completion formula because the temple had already been completed. The MT thus suggests that Pharaoh's invasion and Solomon's marriage to his daughter was the beginning of Solomon's fall.

⁴¹ Cf. D.W. GOODING, *Relics of Ancient Exegesis. A Study of the Miscellanies in 3 Reigns 2 (SOTSMonS 4; Cambridge 1976)*; E. TOV, "The LXX Additions (Miscellanies) in 1 Kings 2 (3 Reigns 2)", *Textus* 11 (1984) 89-118; VAN KEULEN, *Two Versions*, 36-81.

⁴² As presented in the table, the $G^{Ant.}$ transforms the partial formula of Type III into the Type II completion formula.

By contrast, there are several notes on Pharaoh's daughter in 3 Kgdms^B 2,35a-n (cf. 2,1-14 in the G^{Ant.}) and in 3 Kgdms^B 4,1-33 (cf. 4,1 – 5,3 in the G^{Ant.}) that the MT places in 1 Kings 9. The organization of the G^{B, Ant.} presents the conflict with the Pharaoh of Egypt and his invasion as part of the succession narrative and interprets Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter as an example of Solomon's superior administrative skills. In this account, Solomon had to resolve both internal conflicts in his realm and the external problems with Egypt before he could start constructing the temple. In the G^{B, Ant.} account, Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter is portrayed as the result of Solomon's sublime wisdom, which was also a prerequisite for the construction of the temple. However, the relocation of references to Pharaoh's daughter before the construction of the temple in the G^{B, Ant.} required new narrative strategies. One of them was the use of the completion formulas. The formulas function as explanatory notes that direct the attention of the audience to the later parts of the Solomon narrative. Following this logic, verse 3 Kgdms^{B, Ant.} 7,45 states that Solomon built a palace for Pharaoh's daughter, 9,9 relates that she was brought to her palace in Jerusalem (anticipated in 3 Kgdms^B 2,35c.f; cf. 2,3,6 in the G^{Ant.}), and 11,1 reports that she was one among many foreign wives and concubines who led Solomon astray.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SOLOMON NARRATIVE

The analysis presented above has above all an impact on the synchronic reading of the Solomon narrative. A narrative and structural analysis examines the narrative strategies and rhetorical devices of a given text. Therefore, omissions and additions in versions, even though considered later additions or even scribal mistakes, play an important role in determining the structure and the narrative strategies of a given text.

1. *Structure of the Solomon narrative in the MT*

As argued in 2.3.1 the Type II completion formula occurs in the MT and in the G^A (3,1 and 9,1) and it represents one of the rhetorical devices that link together two larger narrative blocks, specifically, 1 Kings 3–5 and 9–10⁴³. Both blocks contain Solomon's dreams and the account of

⁴³ The structure of the G^A follows that of the MT with a few nuances. The G^A introduces Type I formula also in 6,3d and thus separates external parts of the temple from the exterior of the temple (cf. 2.2.1). The Type II formula in 8,53 in the G^A creates a narrative space that allows the introduction of a quote from the Book of the Song.

Solomon's glory. These blocks frame the temple and palace building accounts, on the one hand; on the other hand, they set apart chapters 1 Kings 1–2⁴⁴ and 11, which assume the role of the beginning and the end of the Solomon narrative. 1 Kings 1–2 describes Solomon's rise to power and the succession struggles, whereas 1 Kings 11 describes Solomon's downfall. Thus, the Type II completion formula is one of the elements that sets the main contours of the Solomon narrative⁴⁵. This analysis shows that the MT organized the Solomon narrative in the form of a concentric structure that put the building account in the center:

- A Solomon's rise to power (1 Kings 1–2)
 Type II formula (1 Kgs 3,1)
- B Dream and Solomon's glory (1 Kings 3–5)
 C Temple building account (1 Kings 6–7; 8)
 Type II formula (1 Kgs 9,1)
- B' Dream and Solomon's glory (1 Kings 9–10)
- A' Solomon's downfall (1 Kings 11)

Structure of 1 Kings 6–9

The analysis presented above has showed that the MT organized the Solomon narrative in the form of a concentric structure that put the building account in the center.

The MT has the palace building account inserted in the middle of the temple building account. The chiasmic link formula in 6,31 and 7,1 opens a narrative space for the palace building account. The merism break formula puts a narrative stop in 7,9, and so verses 7,10–12 function as a transition between the palace and the temple building account⁴⁶. Thus, the palace building account can be interpreted as a digression inserted into the midst of the temple building account⁴⁷. After a short digression describing the construction of the royal palace (7,1–11), the temple building account resumes in 7,12b. Verses 7,13–50 describe the work in bronze and other temple objects. The completion formula containing the verb שלם in 7,51a concludes the temple building account (1 Kings 6–7) and opens the

⁴⁴ Some scholars prefer to start the temple building account in 2,12b, following the G^{Ant}; see WALSH, *1 Kings*, 45.

⁴⁵ It has been suggested to divide the Solomon narrative in other ways: the account englobes the Jeroboam narrative 1 Kgs 2,10 – 14,20, including Solomon's construction of the temple complex and royal palace; see M.A. SWEENEY, *I & II Kings* (OTL; Louisville, KY 2007) 62, 104. Some scholars include the preparatory work within the temple building account of 1 Kgs 5,15 – 9,9; see NOBILE, *1–2 Re*, 80–93.

⁴⁶ Cf. GRAY, *I & II Kings*, 166–171. Some scholars see a transition only in v. 7,12b; see WALSH, *1 Kings*, 105.

⁴⁷ Cf. WALSH, *1 Kings*, 104–106; his assumption is further supported by the conclusion in 7,51, which does not mention the palace.

dedication ceremony that starts with the transfer of the utensils (7,51b) ⁴⁸. However, the completion formulas do not appear in chapter 8, which is set aside and which has its own specific structure ⁴⁹.

- C Temple building account (6–7; 8)
 - I. Temple building (6,1-38)
 - Link formula* (6,38 – 7,1)
 - Palace digression (7,1-9a)
 - Merism formula* (7,9b)
 - Transition (7,10-12)
 - II. Temple furnishings (7,13-51)

As argued above, the Type I formula occurs only in the temple building account (6,1-38). The sandwich formula (6,1.37-38) frames 1 Kings 6 and presents the temple building account as a separate unit. Taking into consideration the occurrences of the Type I formulas (cf. 2.4.1) we propose to interpret the temple building account as a concentric narrative ⁵⁰:

- I. Temple building (6,1-38)
 - α Frame 6,1; *sandwich formula*
 - β The construction of the external shell out of stone (6,2-8);
 - Type I formula* (6,8)
 - γ God's speech, the completion of the external shell: (6,9b-10);
 - Type I formula* (6,14)
 - β' The interior of the temple (6,15-36)
 - α' Frame (6,37-38); *sandwich formula*

By this rhetorical device, the redactors of the MT made the Deuteronomistic addition in 1 Kgs 6,11-13 the center of the Solomon narrative. The speech interrupts the temple building account and presents the conditions under which God would be present among the Israelites. The speech is similar to that of early prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 13,20; 16,1; 17,2.8; 18,1; 21,17.28) and focuses exclusively on the commandments and statutes. It sets the standards according to which the actions of the king and his people would be judged.

Furthermore, the account on the interior of the temple (β' 6,15-36) contains another break formula in 6,22b that splits the unit into two parts:

- β' The interior of the temple (6,15-36)
 - i Interior section of the temple and the first set of the decoration (6,15-22a)
 - Break formula* (6,22b)
 - ii Special objects and the second set of the decoration (6,23-36)

⁴⁸ Cf. WALSH, *1 Kings*, 123.

⁴⁹ See the author's forthcoming article in *New Avenues in Biblical Exegesis in Light of the LXX* (eds. L. PESSOA – D. SCIALABBA) (The Septuagint in its Ancient Context; Turnhout 2022).

⁵⁰ For similar structures, see DEVRIES, *1 Kings*, 88-90.

The MT has other break formulas in 7,22.40b.51a. Besides the formulas, the MT has the word **מלאכה** that occurs at the beginning of the narrative (7,13) and then reappears in 7,22.40.51. By means of these narrative devices the section is divided into three subunits:

- II. Temple furnishings (7,13-51a)
 - Introduction (7,13-14)
 - Pillars I (7,15-22a)
 - Break formula* (7,22b)
 - Temple objects I (7,23-40a)
 - Break formula* (7,40b)
 - Pillars II and objects II (7,41-50)
 - Conclusion with *the break formula* (7,51a)
 - Transportation of the temple objects (7,51b)

Finally, there are two break formulas that suggest the following division of 1 Kings 9:

- B' Solomon's dream and glory (1 Kings 9–10)
 - Type II formula* (1 Kgs 9,1)
 - Dream (9,1-9)
 - Break formula* (9,10a)
 - Solomon's great deed (9,11 – 10,29)
 - Solomon's glory and sacrifices (9,11-25a)
 - Hinge formula* (9,25b)
 - Solomon's international relations (9,26 – 10,29)

This structure puts emphasis on Solomon's second dream. The central part of the dream is God's long speech, rendered in typical Deuteronomistic language and centered on the commandments, the blessings and the curses, the preservation of Davidic dynasty, Moses, exodus, and exile. The MT, contrary to the $G^{B, Ant.}$, inserted a similar conditional promise voiced in the Deuteronomistic language already in 1 Kgs 6,11-13 and in 2,1-4. Thus, in the MT Solomon's second dream concludes with a series of instructions imparted to Solomon through David (1 Kgs 2,1-4), through the direct speech of God (1 Kgs 6,11-13), and now through the dream (1 Kgs 9,3-9). The triple series of instructions emphasized the gravity of Solomon's deviation from the Lord's directives (1 Kings 11).

2. Structure of the Solomon narrative in the $G^{B, Ant.}$

The completion formulas point out several differences between the structure and narrative strategies of the MT and the $G^{B, Ant.}$. The fundamental difference concerns the temple and palace building accounts.

The completion formulas are markers that point out the overall organization of the Solomon narrative in the $G^{B,Ant.}$ as well. There are two Type III completion formulas (cf. 2.4.3) that occur in the miscellanea (3 Kgdms^B 2,35c, 4,31-32) that are changed into Type II formulas in the $G^{Ant.}$. These formulas should be contextualized.

The $G^{B,Ant.}$ have a first group of miscellanea in the midst of 3 Kingdoms 2. The miscellanea are located between the execution of Joab and Shimei (3 Kgdms 2,35a-o in the G^B , equivalent of 2,1-5 in the $G^{Ant.}$). As showed in 2.4.3, the G^B has a hinge/link formula of Type III in 3 Kgdms 2,35c; the $G^{Ant.}$, however, transforms this formula into a Type II formula.

The second group of miscellanea occurs at the end of chapter two (3 Kgdms^B 2,46a-l; cf. 2,26-37 in the $G^{Ant.}$). However, this group does not contain any completion formulas.

The third group of additional miscellanea occur in 3 Kgdms^B 4,20-21.31-33 (cf. 4,20-21 and 5,1-3 in the $G^{Ant.}$). These two sections are part of a longer narrative on Solomon's administrative skill and wisdom (3 Kgdms^B 4,1-33; cf. 4,1 – 5,3 in the $G^{Ant.}$). A link completion formula of Type III occurs at the end of this section (3 Kgdms^B in 4,31). The $G^{Ant.}$ transforms it once again into a Type II formula (5,1).

The last and larger group of miscellanea occurs in the $G^{B,Ant.}$ not in chapter 9 as in the MT, but in chapter 3 Kingdoms 10, after the Queen of Saba episode (3 Kgdms 10,23-33). This group has no completion formula.

As mentioned earlier, the $G^{B,Ant.}$ transfer some miscellanea before the construction of the temple (3 Kingdoms 2 and 4) and at the very end of the narrative, after the Queen of Saba episode (3 Kingdoms 10). This suggests that Solomon's wisdom and administrative skill were a frame that encompassed chapters 1–10. This narrative strategy sets 3 Kingdoms 11 apart and does not treat it as the the end of the Solomon narrative but as the beginning of the Jeroboam narrative. 3 Kgdms 11,1-13 function as transitional verses that, while referring to the episodes from Solomon's life, gradually move the focus of the narrative to Jeroboam. This strategy is even evident in the $G^{Ant.}$, which moves 1 Kgs 1,1-11 to the end of 2 Sam 24 and creates three separate cycles:

- I. David narrative (ends in 2 Kgdms^{Ant.} 24,36; cf. 3 Kgdms^B 1,11/1 Kgs 1,11)
- II. Solomon narrative (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 1,1 – 10,33)
- III. Jeroboam narrative (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 11,1ff)

The redactional interventions evident in the $G^{Ant.}$ (cf. Type II formula in 2.3) use Type II formulas in 2,3; 5,1; 8,1; 8,53; 9,1. These editorial revisions suggest that the temple building account in the $G^{Ant.}$ was framed by Solomon's actions that were on a similar narrative level. According to the $G^{Ant.}$ the temple building account was completed in three phases:

- (1) Dedication ceremony (8,1-52)
Formula Type II
- (2) Confirmation in a vision (8,53)
Formula Type II
- (3) Confirmation in a dream (9,1-9)

Similarly, two occurrences of the Type II formula in 2,3 and 5,1 indicate that the construction of the temple could not start without Solomon's preparatory work. The Type II formulas in 2,3 and 5,1 in the G^{Ant.} underline key aspects of Solomon's preparatory work:

- (1') Solomon's elimination of his opposition (1,1-24 ⁵¹)
Transition with Type II formula (2,1-3)
- (2') Solomon's supreme wisdom and administrative skills (2,4 – 4,31).
Transition with Type II formula (5,1-3)
- (3') Solomon's preparatory work (5,4-20)

As a result, these blocks combine a linear progression of the Solomon narrative with the concentric structure that results in a parallel structure:

- II. Solomon narrative (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 1,1 – 10,33)
 - A Preparatory work for the temple (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 1–5)
 - B Construction of the temple (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 6–7)
 - A' Dedication and acceptance of the temple (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 8,1 – 9,9)
 - B' Other constructions (9,10 – 10,33)

2.1. Structure of 3 Kingdoms 6–7 in the G^{B, Ant.}

The G^{B, Ant.}, contrary to the MT, have two sandwich formulas that create special subunits (cf. 2.4.1). The first sandwich formula appears in 6,1b and 4 in the G^{Ant.}, presenting the foundations of the temple as a separate unit that does not exist in the MT. The second sandwich formula is employed to separate the palace building account (7,38-50) from the temple building account (6,1 – 7,37). Thus, the overall structure of 3 Kingdoms 6–7 is partially different in the G^{B, Ant.}. The narrative is divided into three equal blocks that in a linear way describes the construction of the temple-palace complex. First, the foundations of the temple were laid, then the temple was built, and only once the temple and its utensils were completed, Solomon built his palace. Thus, contrary to the MT, the temple foundations and the palace are put on the same narrative level. Moreover, the temple building account creates a compact narrative (3 Kgdms 6,6 – 7,37), contrary to the MT that has the palace finished before the temple furnishings.

⁵¹ As mentioned above, 3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 1,1 starts with the elimination of the enemies, which corresponds to 1 Kgs 2,12. Consequently, the Solomon narrative starts with "sitting on the throne" and the first episodes of 3 Kgdms^{Ant.} describe the cleansing of the royal court.

- B Temple-palace building account (6,1b – 7,50)
 - 1. Foundations (6,1-4 in the $G^{Ant.}$)
 - Frame; *sandwich formula* (6,1b in the $G^{Ant.}$)
 - Foundations of the temple (6,2-4 in the $G^{Ant.}$)
 - Frame; *sandwich formula* (6,1b in the $G^{Ant.}$)
 - 2. Temple building account (6,6 – 7,37 in the $G^{B,Ant.}$)
 - 3. Palace building account (7,38-50 in the $G^{B,Ant.}$)
 - Frame; *sandwich formula* (7,38a in the $G^{B,Ant.}$)
 - Construction of the palace (7,38b-49 in the $G^{B,Ant.}$)
 - Frame; *sandwich formula* (7,50 in the $G^{B,Ant.}$)

Further nuances in the structure of the temple-palace building account can be pointed out when other completion formulas are taken into account. The $G^{B,Ant.}$ divide the temple building account into two major parts: (A) construction of the temple (6,6-34); and (B) temple furnishings (7,1-36). The first part starts with giving the measurements of the temple and finishes with hanging the curtain in the completed temple 6,6.34). The second part is opened with a short introduction (7,1-2) that shifts the focus from Solomon to Hiram and concludes with a break formula and the repetition of the key word *ἐργον* (cf. 7,1-2.37).

Like the MT, the $G^{B,Ant.}$ also employ the Type I and III formulas to break the temple building account into smaller units. Thus, the Type I formula in 6,8 and 14a divides the story of the construction of the temple into three blocks (cf. 2.3.2). A break formula in 6,21b separates the temple interior from the cherubs, followed by the description of the decorations, doors, courtyard, and curtain (6,22-34). Similarly, the break formula in 7,26b separates the temple furnishings account I from the pillars account II. Taking into consideration these elements the structure of the temple building account in the $G^{B,Ant.}$ is:

- 2. Temple building account (6,6 – 7,37 in the $G^{B,Ant.}$)
 - A. The building of the temple (6,6-34)
 - Fundamental parts of the temple (6,6-7)
 - Type I* (6,8)
 - Exterior shell (6,9-13)
 - Type I* (6,14a)
 - The additional building activities (6,14b-34^B/36^{Ant.})
 - Interior parts of the temple (6,14b-21a)
 - Break formula* (6,21b)
 - Cherubs and decoration (6,22-34)
 - B. Temple furnishings (7,1-36)
 - Introduction (7,1-2)
 - Pillars I, temple furnishings I (7,3-26a)
 - Break formula* (7,26b)
 - Pillars II, temple furnishings II (7,27-37)
 - Conclusion with the break formula (7,37)

There are a few important implications of the completion formulas for the understanding of the palace building account in the G^{B,Ant.}. The MT links the building of the temple and palace together. After the buildings are completed, the narrative describes the utensils and pillars of the temple. By doing so, the utensils are set apart in the MT. This procedure sets the stage for the looting of the temple (cf. 1 Kgs 14,25-26; 2 Kgs 12,18-19; 16,5-9; 18,14-16). Even though the temple utensils were removed, the temple was still able to function. Similarly, in the first invasion of the Babylonians only the temple vessels and objects were taken away. According to this logic, the second invasion destroyed the temple itself.

The G^{B,Ant.} seems to follow a different logic. Supplying the utensils and building the temple were intrinsically connected, although both are separated from the foundation section. These narrative strategies, like other ANE accounts, deal with both the looting and the destruction of the temple. The temple of Jerusalem fits the pattern of most ANE temples, which were regularly looted and destroyed⁵². According to this logic, the G^{B,Ant.} implies in 4 Kingdoms 24–25 that the temple, like most ANE temples, could have been rebuilt because the Babylonians did not touch the foundations of the temple.

III. COMPLETION TERMINOLOGY IN MESOPOTAMIAN INSCRIPTIONS

Completion formulas similar to the biblical ones often occur in ANE texts, in particular in the royal inscriptions. A survey of ANE inscriptions shows that different cultures developed and formalized different traditions of completion formulas and fixed phrases⁵³, as in Kassite Babylonia⁵⁴, Urartu⁵⁵, Suhu⁵⁶, as well as in Achaemenid and Seleucid Persia⁵⁷. The

⁵² When Sennacherib wanted to declare that he completely demolished the city of Babylon, he said: “I destroyed, devastated, (and) burned with fire the city, and (its) buildings, from its foundations to its crenellations. I removed the brick(s) and earth, as much as there was, from the (inner) wall and outer wall, the temples, (and) the ziggurat, (and) I threw (it all) into the Arahtu river” (RINAP 3 223:50-54).

⁵³ In Sumerian inscriptions there is no completion formula, except the repetition of words for building, as in extant west-Semitic inscriptions.

⁵⁴ For example, “(I have) built and restored”; cf. MSKH 1, IM 617,1; 677,1.

⁵⁵ Thus, in Urartu the formula reads *mar-gi-iš-ti-še m̃m̃i-nu-a-ḫi-ni-še i-ni É.GAL ba-du-si ši-di-iš-tú-ni*; “PN built this fortress to perfection” (CTU 1 A 08-17,3; cf. also CTU 1 A 02-7,1, 02-11,1).

⁵⁶ The kings of Suhu used a fixed expression for describing the completion of the Akitu temple *ana-ku a-ki-^ttu₄ UR₅-tú ú-šak-lil-ma*; “I completely (re)built this Akitu temple” (RIMB 2 S.O.1002.2 iv 5’-6’).

⁵⁷ Artaxerxes I’s inscription 2 r. 10-11 reads *e-te-pu-uš u ul-tak-lil* “I have built and completed”. The formula is similar to that of the Assyrian formula, omitting “from

completion formulas were used more frequently in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions. The Babylonian tradition opted for the phrases such as É šá-a-šu eš-šiš e-pu-uš-ma ú-šak-lil ši-pí-ir-šú; “I built that temple anew and completed its construction” (AOAT 256 2.8 iii 33⁵⁸). Even though the completion formulas occur in Babylonian royal inscriptions, they became a whole mark of the Assyrian royal inscriptions that had different variants of the expression *ul-tu uš-še-šu a-di gaba-dib-bé-e-^ršu ar¹-[ši-ip ú]-šak-lil* “I have built and completed it from its foundations to its crenelations” (RINAP 1 5:2).

1. Completion formulas in Assyrian inscriptions

The oldest attested fixed formula is attributed to the Old Assyrian king Puzur Aššur III (c. 1502-1479 BCE): “I built (it) from its foundations to its top (lit. “to its lip” *ša-ap-ti-šu*)”⁵⁹. This variant was used till 9th c. BCE (Shalmaneser III, RIMA 3 A.0.102.43:7) and then was replaced by the formula with *gabadibbu*: “I built and completed (it) from (its) foundation to (its) crenellation”⁶⁰. This variant appears for the first time in a middle Assyrian inscription dated to the reign of Shalmaneser I (13th c. BCE; RIMA 1 A.0.77.4:37-39). This formula and its variants became the most frequently used completion formula until Sin-šarru-iškun (622-612 BCE;

its foundation to its crenellation”. Cyrus II’s inscription n. 1:39-41 follows the Babylonian style *eš-ši-iš e-pu-uš-ma [ú-šak-lil ši-pir-ši]-in*; “I built anew and completed their construction”. The 3rd c. BCE Seleucid royal inscriptions also contain a fixed formula written in a stereotyped way *DU₃^{us}-ma ‘E₂?’-ta-nu u₂-šak-li-il*; “I built and completed XY” (Anu-uballit Kephalon 1:14; cf. also Nikarchus 1:10.15; for all inscriptions cf. ORACC website).

⁵⁸ Cf. also other Nabonidus’ inscriptions AOAT 256 2.12 ii 5, iii 4; 2.13 iii 36; 2.14 i 20, ii 7, iii 3. See also its variants *ina ši-pir^a kulla ar-šip ú-šak-lil* (RIMB 2 B.6.31.11,16). There is a variant that mixed the Assyrian and Babylonian formula: É.KUR *šu-a-tim ul-tu te-me-en-ši a-di gaba-dib-bi-šú e-eš-ši-iš ab-ni-ma ú-šak-lil ši-pir-šú*; “I built that temple anew from its foundation(s) to its crenellation and completed its construction” (AOAT 256 2.12 ii 8-9). This mixed style is probably inspired from the Babylonian inscriptions of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, who, even though writing in Babylonian, still used a variant of the Assyrian formula (cf. RINAP 4 114 iv 16-24).

⁵⁹ The formula existed in two variants *‘iš^r-tu uš-še-šu ‘qa¹-du ša-ap-ti-šu e-pu-uš*; “I built (it) from its foundation together with its top” (RIMA 1 A.0.69.1:10) and in variant *iš-tu uš-še-šu a-di ša-ap-ti-šu e-pu-uš*; “I built (it) from its foundation to its top” (RIMA 1 A.0.70.1:10-11).

⁶⁰ Besides this expression there are also other variants such as *a-na si-ḫir-ti-šú ar-šip [ú-šak-lil]*; “I built and [completed] it in its entirety” (RINAP 4 12:17), *a-na iš-šu-ti DÜ-uš* “I built it anew” (RIMA 3 A.0.102.26,24), or “I completely (re)built (it) with the work of the god Kulla according to its ancient specifications (and) raised its top (as high) as a mountain” (RINAP 4 133:30-33).

RINAP 5 1:13'). Later Neo-Assyrian inscriptions sometimes have the *naburru* "battlements" instead of the term *gabadibbu* ⁶¹.

A standard *gabadibbu* formula took the verbs expressing "to build", *epēšu/banû/rašāpu*, and "to complete", *šuklulu* ⁶². However, the fixed formula was quite flexible. Sometimes one of the verbs was omitted (RIMA 1 A.0.78.6,34-35) or the word order was changed (RIMA 1 A.0.78.5:81-82).

In most cases the formula refers to the completion of a temple (cf. for example RINAP 3 10:18-19) and a palace (RINAP 3 10:18-19). It also referred to a city (RINAP 1 2001:6b-7), a city wall (RIMA 1 A.0.70.1:10), a storehouse (RIMA 1 A.0.76.17,4-12), or a chamber of a temple (RINAP 3/2 166:27-30). It was used for both new construction (RINAP 3 36 r.3'-10') or for the reconstruction of a dilapidated building (RIMA 3 A.0.102.10 iv 40-50).

The copies of the royal inscriptions show that one building account used the formula while the other copy did not ⁶³. Similarly, the same building account used different formulas in attested textual variants ⁶⁴.

Beside the fixed formula a partial completion formula is used in subordinate clauses, as for example the phrase *ul-tu šip-ri É.GAL šú-a-tú ag-mur-ú-ma* ⁶⁵ *ú-qa-tu-u ši-pir-šá*: "After I finished the work on that palace and completed its construction" (RINAP 4 93:32).

The formulas in the Assyrian royal inscriptions do not seem to be located randomly in the Assyrian texts, but rather in clearly determined parts of the building accounts, and they assume a specific role. The formulas frequently substitute for a building account ⁶⁶ or they open or close it ⁶⁷. The formulas can also occur in the midst of building accounts, where they function as a narrative break. Thus, the formulas can separate the description of the temple from its entrance (RIMA 2 A.0.87.1:89-90) or from its decoration (RIMA 2 A.0.98.3:11-12). The formula is often inserted

⁶¹ In the Neo-Assyrian period the words *gabadibbu* and *naburru* were interchangeable; thus Sennacherib's scribes used both to describe the construction of the temple Egallammes (*gabadibbu* in RINAP 3/2 214:1; 216,5-6; *naburru* in 213:64).

⁶² Cf. for *epēšu* RIMA 1 A.0.77.4:37-39; for *banû* RIMA 1 A.0.78.11:52-55; for *rašāpu* RIMA 2 A.0.98.3:11-12.

⁶³ Referring to the city of Ḫumut: with formula RINAP 1 5:1-4; without formula RINAP 1 47:10-11.

⁶⁴ Referring to the city of Ḫadattu: the verbs *rašāpu* and *šuklulu* are used in RINAP 1 53:19, whereas the verbs *banû*, *rašāpu*, and *šuklulu* in RINAP 5 2001:7. The descriptions of Sennacherib's Akītu house in Aššur have at least three variants (longer: RINAP 3/2 168:31-33; shorter: RINAP 3/2 171:4-7; different verbs: RINAP 3/2 174:1-6).

⁶⁵ The verb *gamāru* would be an equivalent of the Hebrew שלם.

⁶⁶ RIMA 1 A.0.76.15:9; A.0.77.6,8; RIMA 2 A.0.101.45:13-19.

⁶⁷ In RIMA 2 A.0.87.10:64 the building account follows the formula.

before the deposition of the foundation inscription (RIMA 1 A.0.77.4:37-39) and before the construction of the roof (RINAP 4 12:17). Sometimes it appears before the description of setting up the throne for the divinity (RIMA 2 A.0.101.40:35). It was also employed to separate the description of the main hall of the temple from the temple's inner sanctuary, in which Ishtar would dwell (RIMA 1 A.0.78.16:47-50).

Normally the formula occurs only once in inscriptions and only rarely twice in the same inscription⁶⁸. There are also occurrences when the formula functions as an *inclusion* framing a building account (similar to a sandwich type of formula)⁶⁹. An *inclusion* was also used for framing a section of the building narrative, such as the foundations⁷⁰. The *inclusion* could even frame the narrative that contained another completion formula⁷¹.

2. Origin of the formula

As demonstrated above, the Mesopotamian inscriptions inserted the completion formula before the entire building had been completed. Why speak about the completion of the temple before the temple had been completed? Were these completion formulas only literary markers introduced by scribes to divide the building into sections, or did the formulas have another meaning?

The answer to these questions can be sought in a comparison of the various inscriptions. As an illustrative example, we present Nabonidus' inscription (AOAT 256 2.12 i 41-ii 43; the English translation is from ORACC). The completion formula is inserted between the account of the construction of the foundation and that of the roof of the temple. However, the formula speaks about the completion of the temple (to its crenellation) even before the roof was constructed.

⁶⁸ For example, in Tiglath-pileser I's inscriptions (RIMA 2 A.0.87.1 vii 85-86, 96-97).

⁶⁹ RINAP 3/1 22 iv 37 and vi 71-72.

⁷⁰ *I strengthened its foundation(s) with massive (blocks of) mountain stone.*

I made that wall thicker than the previous one (and) I heaped (it) up like a mountain. I built (and) completed (it) from its foundation(s) to its crenellations.

I strengthened its foundation(s) more than previously (RINAP 5 3 viii 65-69).

⁷¹ *I took Tušša in hand for renovation. I cleared away its old wall, delineated its area, reached its foundation pit, (and) built (and) completed (and) decorated in a splendid fashion a new wall from top to bottom. A palace for my royal residence I founded inside. I made doors (and) hung (them) in its doorways. That palace I built (and) completed from top to bottom* (RIMA 2 A.0.92.17 ii 6-14).

Introduction	In a favorable month, (on) an auspicious day, that the gods Šamaš and Adad had revealed to me through divination, using the wisdom of the gods Ea and Asalluhi, through the craft of the incantation priest, (and) with the craft of the god Kulla, the lord of foundation(s) and brickwork, during joyous celebrations,
Ritual	I laid its foundations in silver, gold, a selection of precious stones, (and) crushed pieces of wood (and) cedar aromatics, (precisely) on the foundation(s) of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria [...] I blended šallaru-plaster with beer, vine, oil, (and) honey, and mixed (it into) its revetment.
Formula	I made its structure stronger than that of the kings, my ancestors, and had its construction more expertly executed. I built that temple anew from its foundation(s) to its crenellations and completed its construction.
Roof	I had long beams of cedar grown on Mount Amanus stretched out over it (for its roof). I had doors of cedar, whose scent is sweet, installed in its gates. I had its walls clad with silver and gold and made (them) radiate like the sun.
Placement of protective deities and dedication	I stationed a wild bull of shiny zaḫalû-metal, which aggressively gores my foes (to death), in his inner sanctum. I firmly planted two long-haired heroes of ešmarû-metal, who overwhelm my enem(ies), in the Gate of the Rising Sun, (on) the right and left. I took the deities Sîn [...], my lords, by the hand, (leading them out) of Šuanna (Babylon), the city of my royal majesty, and I made (them) reside inside the residence of (their) happiness during joyous celebrations.
Offerings	I offered pure, sumptuous offerings before them [...]
Prayer	O Sîn, king of the gods of heaven and earth, without whom no city or land can be abandoned or restored (lit. “returned to its place”) [...]. (As for) me, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, the one who completed this temple — may the god Sîn, king of the gods of heaven and earth, look with pleasure upon me with his favorable glance and monthly, at sunrise and sunset, make my signs auspicious. May he lengthen my days, increase my years, (and) make my reign endure. May he conquer my enemies, cut down those hostile to me, (and) flatten my foes. May the goddess Ningal, mother of the great gods, speak laudatory word(s) about me in the presence of the god Sîn, her beloved. May the god Šamaš and the goddess Ištar, his bright offspring, say good thing(s) about me to the god Sîn, the father who created them. May the god Nusku, the exalted vizier, hear my prayers and intercede (on my behalf).

Nabonidus' inscription is not the only royal inscription that refers to a ritual. Similar rituals are mentioned in both Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions ⁷², such as mixing clay with various substances (honey, fine oil, resin, beer, wine ⁷³), the anointing of older inscriptions, and depositing ritual objects into foundations ⁷⁴. Besides the royal inscriptions the Neo-Assyrian letters also confirm that the construction process was often interrupted by rituals (SAA X 354:13; XII 86:9-11). The importance of the rituals during the building process can be inferred from the Assyrian royal inscriptions that mention that the construction of a temple required not only specialized workers but also cultic personnel (RINAP 5 10:27-33). The reason for introducing appropriate building rituals was that the king wanted to avoid angering the gods and guarantee that they would accept the temple or the palace.

The building rituals are not only directly or indirectly mentioned in the letters and in the royal inscriptions, but some building rituals have been preserved. C. Ambos' reconstruction of building rituals shows which were performed during various phases of building the temple. At the very beginning of the construction, when the substructure of the temple was laid down, the priests performed *namburbi* called *enūma IM.DÛ.A tapattiqu*, "When you lay down the substructures" ⁷⁵. Rituals were also performed when the foundations of the temple were completed ⁷⁶. Another important ritual was performed when the doors were completed ⁷⁷. Finally, when the entire temple was finished the priest performed the ritual known as *enūma Kulla ešteššû*, "When Kulla was brought out" ⁷⁸. Thus Ambos' reconstruction of the building rituals indicates that important phases of the temple or palace were accompanied by such ceremonies ⁷⁹.

⁷² The rituals connected with the construction and completion of various parts of the temple were known also in the Hittite texts; G. BECKMAN, "Temple Building among the Hittites", in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations. Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible* (eds. M.J. BODA – J.R. NOVOTNY) (AOAT 366; Münster 2010) 71-89.

⁷³ Cf. RIMA 1 A.0.77.1:141-148.

⁷⁴ See for example the inscription of Shalmaneser I: "I deposited my monumental inscriptions. I anointed with oil the monumental inscriptions of my forefathers, made sacrifices, and returned them with stones, silver, and gold to their places" (RIMA 1 A.0.77.4:39-43).

⁷⁵ C. AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale aus dem 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Dresden 2004) 118-121.

⁷⁶ AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 9, 132-141.

⁷⁷ AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 10.

⁷⁸ AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 94-109.

⁷⁹ Even though no extant ritual was performed before or after the construction of the roof, the roof played an important role in the building rituals; see AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 114-116.

As shown above, the completion formulas have a rhetorical function above all else. They summarize the whole building narrative, break the account into smaller sections, and anticipate what would happen next. Without undermining the rhetorical role of the completion formulas in the Mesopotamian inscriptions, we advance a proposal that links the building rituals with the completion formulas. If the moments when the rituals were performed — according to C. Ambos, tearing down the old temple, re-building new foundations, roofs, doors, cells, and completing the decoration — are compared with the most frequent occurrences of the completion formulas in the royal inscriptions, it is reasonable to conclude that the Mesopotamian completion formulas could in some cases mark the moments when such rituals were performed. This hypothesis can be supported by the fact that both the royal inscriptions described above and the building rituals employ the same elements such as aromatic essences, oil, honey, wine, milk, etc.⁸⁰, relied on the same cult personal (*kalû* priests⁸¹), and used the verb *šaklulu* “to complete”⁸² as well as the expression “to build anew”⁸³.

As the royal inscriptions did not always include the description of the rituals, so the completion formulas referring to a ritual may have been left out. This conclusion does not mean that in some cases the completion formulas were not merely rhetorical devices, in particular, when the formula is a merism for the construction of the whole temple or when it frames the building account or its parts.

3. Diachronic implications

As argued above, the completion formulas were a regular part of the ANE building accounts. Both Mesopotamian and biblical formulas contain the verbs “to build” and “to complete”. The completion formulas in the royal inscriptions (cf. 4.1) and the Type I completion formula in the biblical narrative play similar roles and occur in similar places in the building narratives. Thus, the Type I completion formulas also served to open and/or to close a building account (as in 1 Kgs 6,1.37-38). They also occur after laying the foundation of the building (as in 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,4-5) and before the description of the roofing of the temple (as in 1 Kgs 6,9a/

⁸⁰ AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 133-141, 174-175.

⁸¹ AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 171-199.

⁸² Thus, the gods are invited to complete the construction of the building; see AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 184, l. D5¹.

⁸³ A ritual was to be performed when the lower structure of the temple (IM.DÙ.A) was built anew; see AMBOS, *Mesopotamische Baurituale*, 118, l. 1-3.

3 Kgdms^B 6,14a). They separate the main layout from the rest of the narrative (as in 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,8) and the exterior from the interior of the temple (as in 1 Kgs 6,14/3 Kgdms^A 6,14). In sum, we can conclude that the use of the Type I completion formulas in 1 Kings 6–7 corresponds to the ancient Mesopotamian scribal use of the concluding formulas. This correspondence allows us to suggest that the Type I formulas are variants of the formulas known in the second and first millennium BCE.

Besides the Type I formulas, other completion formulas also display similarities with the Mesopotamian formulas; thus, the break formulas (1 Kgs 6,22; 7,22, 40b) also divide the temple and palace building accounts in smaller units, the sandwich formulas frame the foundations of the temple (3 Kgdms^{Ant.} 6,1-4) and the palace building account (3 Kgdms 7,38-50), and a merism formula concludes the palace building account (1 Kgs 7,9.51a).

Moreover, Nabonidus' inscription (AOAT 256 2.12 i 41-ii 43) ⁸⁴ displays several similarities with the biblical account (1 Kings 6–8). Both start with the propitious date for building the temple and contain various types of completion formulas. Both texts have the description of the roof, the interior, the decoration, the sacrifices, and the king's prayer and feast. This inscription and other Mesopotamian texts suggest that the completion formulas sometimes mark the moments when sacrifices were offered. Since the oldest biblical completion formulas also reflected the Mesopotamian logic, the biblical completion formulas in 1 Kings 6–7 also might have originally marked the moments when some building rituals accompanied the building of the foundations, roof, doors, decoration, and pillars, as well as the overall completion of the temple and palace.

Based on this and the previous discussion, we suggest that the Type I completion formula in 1 Kgs^{MT} 6,9a / 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,14a reflects the oldest version of the Hebrew and Greek text. This completion formula is located before the description of the roof. Based on the similar occurrences of such formula in the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions and the rituals that were linked to the construction of the roof, we suggest that this formula originally marked a moment for a ritual and only later became a structural marker.

Since the location of formulas in 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,8 is confirmed by most Greek and Ethiopic manuscripts but is missing in the MT, it can be suggested that the occurrences of the Type I formula in the MT and the G^{B,Ant.}

⁸⁴ The structural similarities between 1 Kings 6–8 and the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions are not limited to Nabonidus inscription. For further study, see V.A. HUROWITZ, *I Have Built an Exalted House*. Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings (Sheffield 1992) 2-190.

point to two possible streams of the development of the text: a text with two formulas as reflected in the G^{B,Ant.} (3 Kgdms 6,8 and 14a) and a text with one formula as reflected in the MT (1 Kgs 6,9a).

A next stage of the development of the text reflects the Type I formula in 1 Kgs 6,14. The G^{B,Ant.} do not have the divine speech as in 1 Kgs 6,11-13 nor the completion formula that closes the divine speech in 1 Kgs 6,14. Following the majority of scholars, who for good reasons consider the divine speech a later addition⁸⁵, we suggest that the completion formula in 1 Kgs 6,14 is a later addition as well, since it occurs only in the manuscripts that include the divine speech.

The formulas that occur in 1 Kings/3 Kingdoms 3, 5, 9 have a different function. They aim at creating links between various parts of 1 Kings 3–9, and it can be rightly concluded that Type II and III formulas in these chapters represent a later literary development of the text that used the formulas to tie up the Solomon narrative. The differences between 1 Kgs 8,12-13 and 3 Kgdms 8,53a suggests that the formula in 3 Kgdms 8,53 also belongs to this group⁸⁶.

A different formula is used in miscellanea (3 Kgdms^B 2,35c, g; 4,31-32)⁸⁷. A comparison of this formula with a similar formula in 1 Kgs 3,1 shows that the G^{B,Ant.} have a reversed order. The G^{B,Ant.} recount the construction of the temple first and then the palace, whereas the MT in 1 Kgs 3,1 places the palace first and the temple afterward⁸⁸. Similarly, the sandwich formulas in 1 Kgs 9,10.25 can be considered a later development. The formula in 1 Kgs 9,10 is not in the G^{B,Ant.,A}, which suggests that the redactors intentionally created a narrative frame for the miscellanea in

⁸⁵ M. NOTH, *Könige*. I. Teilband (BK IX/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968) 118; J. GRAY, *I & II Kings*, 157-158; MULDER, *1 Kings*, 251-253; VAN KEULEN, *Two Versions*, 145-147.

⁸⁶ For the differences between these two speeches of Solomon, see J.C. TREBOLLE BARRERA, "From Secondary Versions through Greek Recension to Hebrew Editions. The Contribution of the Old Latin Version", *The Text of the Hebrew Bible and Its Editions*. Studies in Celebration of the Fifth Centennial of the Complutensian Polyglot (eds. P.A. TORRIANO – A. PIQUER OTERO) (Supplements to the Textual History of the Bible 1; Leiden 2017) 160-179; M. RICHELLE, "How to Edit an Elusive Text? The So-Called Poem of Solomon (1 Kgs 8,12-13 MT // 8,53a Lxx) as a Case Study", *Textus* 27 (2018) 205-228; S.-F. KATÓ, "Der Tempelweihspruch Salomos (1 Reg 8,12-13/Lxx III Bas 8,53): Eine Neuer Vorschlag", *ZAW* 131 (2019) 220-234.

⁸⁷ It has been suggested that the miscellanea might have been based on the Mesopotamian inscriptions; see A. PIQUER OTERO, "The Miscellanies of 3 Kgdms 2: Archaeology and Context", in *Die Septuaginta. Geschichte — Wirkung — Relevanz* (eds. M. MEISER et al.) (Tübingen 2018) 274-287. Based on this study it can be suggested that the concluding formulas in the miscellanea were introduced later in order to create smooth links between these sections and the rest of the Books of the Kings.

⁸⁸ VAN KEULEN (*Two Versions*, 138-140) suggested that the G^{B,Ant.} adjusted the order so that it might reflect the order in chapter six and seven. Verses 2,35a-o can be interpreted as a later interpretation of Midrashic type; see GOODING, *Relics*, 34-36.

1 Kgs 9,19-25. It stands to reason to conclude that all these formulas have developed during later phases of the formation of the Greek and Hebrew text.

Finally, there are formulas in the G^A (6,3d; 8,53) that evidently harmonized the $G^{B,Ant.}$ with the MT. This harmonization of the Greek and Hebrew texts can be rightly considered one of the latest phases of the development of the biblical text. Similar later developments led to the transformation of the Type III formulas of the G^B into Type II formulas in the $G^{Ant.}$ (2,3; 5,1).

SYNTHESIS

I proposed to divide the completion formulas into three groups. Type I contains the verbs כלה and בנה *wayyiqtol* and reads “(Solomon) built (ויבן) the temple and completed it (ויכלהו)” (1 Kgs 6,9). This formula serves to divide the temple narrative into subsections and to separate different kinds of material used for the construction of the temple. The Type II formula has the verbs בנה and כלה in the infinitive construct and serves to link blocks 1 Kgs 3–5 and 9–10 in the MT, to introduce Solomon’s speech in 3 Kgdms 8,53a, and to create a link between chapters 8 and 9 in the Greek manuscripts. Finally, there are the partial completion formulas labeled as Type III. These formulas have multiple functions, serving as a frame, a break, or a hinge in the Solomon narrative.

The analysis of the role of the completion formulas shows that these formulas have an impact on the structure of the Solomon narrative and its rhetoric. Since the position and the number of formulas differ in the Greek and Hebrew narratives, my analysis shows that we cannot speak about one structure and about one rhetoric in the Solomon narrative. The formulas support the division of the MT into a concentric structure while the Greek manuscripts have a parallel structure.

The last part of this paper is dedicated to the analysis of the similar formulas in the ANE royal inscriptions. The similarities between the ANE and the biblical formulas suggest that the formulas constituted an indispensable part of the building narrative since the third millennium BCE. A comparison of the location of the formula with the building rituals indicates that some formulas also serve to mark off the moments when the building rituals were performed, whereas the others had a purely literary function. A similar role of the completion formulas can be observed in the biblical texts as well. Taking into consideration these results, I have

argued that the most ancient completion formula occurs in 1 Kgs^{MT} 6,9a / 3 Kgdms^{B,Ant.} 6,14a while the formulas in the G^A (6,3d; 8,53) and in the G^{Ant.} (2,3; 5,1) represent the most recent additions.

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SUMMARY

This paper analyses completion terminology in the Solomon narrative as preserved in four important types of text: the Masoretic text, the *Codex Vaticanus*, the Antiochian text, and the *Codex Alexandrinus*. After having divided the completion formulas into three groups, the author analyzes the function of the formulas in Hebrew and Greek texts. Based on this analysis he examines the role of the completion formulas for the structure of the Solomon narrative in the Hebrew and Greek texts. The last part of the paper focuses on the development of this formula in the light of ANE texts and shows the implications of this study for the diachronic analysis of the Solomon narrative.

QUELLE CONVERSION POUR LES PAÏENS EN AC 10,1 – 11,18 ET QUELLES CONSÉQUENCES POUR LA RELATION PIERRE/PAUL? *

Si l'épisode d'Ac 10,1 – 11,18 a été de nombreuses fois analysé exégétiquement, il ne l'a été narrativement que récemment ¹. Le présent article utilise lui aussi l'approche narrative.

En suivant les événements qui se déroulent en Actes 10–11, il montrera qu'en décrivant l'épisode d'Actes 10 comme une conversion, Ac 11,18 le résume et l'interprète de manière paradoxale et décisive pour le reste du récit des Actes, car le type de conversion retenu par les croyants de Jérusalem pose une question inattendue: en n'exigeant pas de Corneille et des siens qu'ils se fassent circoncire, autrement dit qu'ils deviennent sujets de la loi mosaïque, le Pierre d'Actes 10–11 est-il paulinien — ou est-ce Paul qui, dans le reste d'Actes, sera pétrinien? Seule l'approche narrative peut répondre à cette question.

I. LE RÉCIT DE LA CONVERSION DES PAÏENS

1. *Présentation de Corneille et de Pierre*

Le récit commence avec Corneille. Le narrateur (désormais, Nr) ne mentionne pas son aspect extérieur — son physique, ses vêtements —, mais (i) son statut social — il est militaire, qui plus est officier, centurion d'une cohorte renommée — (ii) ses qualités morales et religieuses — s'il est païen, il est néanmoins très généreux envers la communauté juive, et est un «craignant Dieu» (10,22). La présentation du personnage par le Nr est très favorable, et le lecteur ne s'étonne pas lorsque le Nr ajoute qu'un ange lui apparaît pour lui rappeler que sa générosité et sa prière ont plu à Dieu. Les propos du Nr sont ainsi corroborés par un personnage divin. Dès lors, l'information suivante — l'ange demande à Corneille de faire venir Simon-Pierre (vv. 5-6) — ne peut être comprise que comme

* Je remercie vivement Jean-Noël Aletti sj pour sa lecture minutieuse et ses suggestions.

¹ T. VAN NGUYEN, *The Legitimation of the Gentile Mission and Integration: A Narrative Approach to Acts 10:1 – 11:18* (Rome 2004). Par certaines de ses observations, l'analyse rédactionnelle de C. LUKASZ, *Evangelizzazione e Conflitto*. Indagine sulla coerenza letteraria e tematica della pericope di Cornelio (Atti 10,1 – 11,18) (Frankfurt am Main 1993) annonçait déjà l'approche narrative.

une déclaration implicite de récompense: si Dieu lui demande de faire venir Pierre, c'est très certainement pour lui accorder quelque chose. Le lecteur doit aussi noter que les événements qui vont être ensuite racontés — la visite de Pierre, le baptême et le don de l'Esprit Saint — sont un effet de la volonté divine. Il est ainsi indirectement dit que c'est Dieu qui engendre les événements d'Actes 10–11 — et le récit qui en sera fait. Sans savoir exactement pourquoi il doit faire venir Pierre, qu'il ne connaît pas, Corneille obéit à l'ordre de l'ange — en envoyant des gens de sa maison (vv. 7-8) —, ce qui souligne encore ses qualités religieuses.

Immédiatement après (vv. 9b-16), Pierre a lui aussi une vision. Il est décrit comme un homme fidèle aux heures de prière juive (v. 9), entièrement fidèle également à la loi mosaïque, en particulier aux règles de kashrout (v. 12), bref un juif exemplaire. Disons tout de suite qu'en le présentant ainsi, le Nr prépare ce qui va suivre: s'il va faire ce qu'aucun juif observant ne doit pas faire — aller à la rencontre de païens et accepter leur hospitalité (Ac 11,3) —, ce n'est pas par désobéissance à la loi mosaïque. Or, pendant qu'il prie, il voit une toile qui descend avec des animaux bizarres et surtout impurs aux yeux de la loi mosaïque, et il entend une voix qui lui dit trois fois «tue et mange». Il importe de noter que Pierre n'a pas obéi à cette triple injonction, signe de sa totale fidélité à la Loi, et surtout à Dieu, de qui viennent les règles alimentaires. S'il n'a pas obéi à l'ordre «Tue et mange», c'est parce que cet ordre va contre la Loi et qu'il est difficile de savoir si la voix qui prononce ces paroles est divine: Dieu relativiserait-il ce qu'il ordonna fermement dans le passé?

Avant de revenir sur ce point, notons que l'on doit se demander pourquoi le Nr relate cette scène, car il suffisait à l'Esprit d'ordonner à Pierre de se rendre chez Corneille pour qu'il obéisse et y aille, accomplissant ainsi l'accueil des païens, un accueil implicitement annoncé par Jésus ressuscité en Ac 1,8: «Vous serez alors mes témoins ... jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre». Il nous faudra voir pourquoi le Nr a évité ce raccourci. Il aurait ainsi pu directement sauter du v. 8 au v. 17b: envoyés à Joppé, après y être arrivés et s'être renseignés sur le lieu où se trouvait Simon-Pierre, les serviteurs de Corneille arrivent au portail et demandent à le voir, pendant que l'Esprit ordonne à Pierre de les rencontrer et de les suivre, sans dire qu'ils sont païens et viennent de la part d'un païen. Pour l'intrigue de situation la triple apparition des animaux impurs n'a aucune importance, puisque Pierre obéit à l'Esprit et suit les envoyés de Corneille sans qu'une allusion y ait été faite ², mais pour l'intrigue de révélation

² L'intrigue de résolution (ou de situation) correspond à la question: «que va-t-il arriver ou se passer?». L'intrigue de révélation consiste en un processus de révélation ou de connaissance d'un personnage et de ses valeurs (souvent du protagoniste).

cela change tout. En effet, le Nr indique au lecteur que l'apparition des animaux est importante pour ce qu'elle va permettre à Pierre de comprendre par la suite; elle est aussi narrativement importante, (i) parce qu'elle se répète trois fois, (ii) parce que Pierre en reste tout confus, se demandant pourquoi il eut cette apparition (Ac 10,17.28) et (iii) la mentionne de nouveau lorsqu'il s'adresse aux frères de Jérusalem (Ac 11,5-10).

2. *Pourquoi la scène avec les animaux?*

Commençons par nous demander de qui est la voix qui parle à Pierre au v. 13. Au v. 3, l'ambiguïté est exclue, car le Nr dit que c'est un ange qui parle à Corneille, alors que pour Pierre, il dit seulement «une voix» (vv. 13 et 15). Comme la voix nomme Pierre et signifie qu'elle le connaît, et comme, d'autre part, Pierre est en train de prier et ravi en extase, le lecteur peut légitimement penser que cette voix est divine. Mais si c'est Dieu qui parle, comment peut-il demander d'effectuer ce qu'il a expressément interdit dans sa Loi? L'ordre ne serait-il pas plutôt une tentation, et la voix celle du diable, dont le récit évangélique montre qu'il connaît ceux qu'il interpelle (Lc 4,34; 8,28)? L'embarras de Pierre a donc deux raisons: (i) il ne sait à qui appartient la voix qui s'adresse à lui, et s'il le nomme «Seigneur» (κύριε), c'est parce que cela pourrait être Dieu ou son ange; (ii) il se demande pourquoi il lui est demandé à lui, strict observant de la Loi³, de faire quelque chose qui lui est contraire. Préférant donc, en juif fidèle, l'obéissance à la Loi, il refuse d'obéir à la voix malgré sa triple insistance⁴. Sa résistance est narrativement d'autant plus normale que la voix ne lui donne pas de raison valable pour appuyer et justifier son ordre. Car, l'explication fournie — «ce que Dieu a purifié, ne le déclare pas impur» (Ac 10,15b) — ne clarifie rien. Le démon peut se faire passer pour Dieu. Si la voix est divine, Pierre peut même penser que Dieu veut le mettre à l'épreuve et tester sa fidélité de juif observant. Trois sont donc les raisons pour lesquelles Pierre, dans le doute, n'a pas obtempéré: (i) la voix peut être démoniaque; (ii) elle peut être divine, et demander de passer outre une règle alimentaire essentielle; (iii) elle est divine, et met Pierre à l'épreuve en espérant qu'il se montrera fidèle à sa Loi en ne consommant pas d'animaux impurs.

³ De l'information fournie au v. 6, à savoir que Pierre est l'hôte d'un corroyeur juif nommé Simon, on ne doit pas en conclure qu'il est pour cela impur et non respectueux de la loi mosaïque, car les corroyeurs juifs ne travaillaient pas les peaux d'animaux impurs.

⁴ Le Nr ne dit pas que le contenu de la nappe remonte au ciel avant que Pierre ait pu exécuter l'ordre «Tue et mange». Le Nr ne peut signaler une quelconque exécution, puisque Pierre a fermement refusé d'obtempérer.

3. *Les hommes envoyés par Corneille (10,17)*

Si Pierre refuse de manger des animaux impurs, il accepte sans protester de donner l'hospitalité aux serviteurs de Corneille, alors qu'ils sont païens, et de les suivre chez Corneille, lui-même païen (Ac 10,22), faut-il voir là une preuve d'inconsistance? Car celui qui respecte scrupuleusement les règles de kashrout enfreint sans scrupule celles de séparation. La scène avec les serviteurs de Corneille est composée de telle façon que sa fonction est de lever les objections possibles de l'apôtre.

(i) Pierre est averti par l'Esprit Saint de l'arrivée des deux hommes, de leur désir de le rencontrer et reçoit l'ordre de les suivre. Cette fois Pierre n'a aucun doute sur l'origine de l'ordre qui lui est donné: c'est bien l'Esprit Saint qui lui parle. Certes l'Esprit Saint ne lui dit pas pourquoi ces hommes veulent le voir et l'emmener avec eux, car ce sont eux qui vont le lui dire. Le Nr ne retient que l'initiative de l'Esprit et l'obéissance de Pierre à ses paroles.

(ii) Pierre aurait pu refuser de suivre les envoyés en apprenant par eux que Corneille est païen, mais l'Esprit a déjà préparé le terrain et les envoyés vont présenter Corneille très positivement, comme le Nr en 10,2: c'est un païen, mais généreux pour la communauté juive, aimé des juifs, lui-même quasiment juif, «craignant Dieu», et, qui a de plus reçu d'un ange l'ordre de faire venir Pierre qu'il ne connaît pas — autant de raisons pour que Pierre croie le récit des deux hommes et suive l'ordre de l'Esprit.

(iii) Les envoyés ajoutent laconiquement que l'ange a dit à Corneille qu'il lui fallait appeler Pierre pour «entendre [s]es paroles» (10,22). Mais l'Esprit ne lui a pas dit qu'il devra parler. Pierre n'a pas été prévenu sur ce qu'il devra dire, et ce d'autant moins que, jusqu'à présent, le nom de Jésus n'a pas été dévoilé à Corneille, et que ni la voix céleste ni l'Esprit n'ont dit à Pierre qu'il devra annoncer Jésus Christ. Ce sera à Pierre de prendre l'initiative. Car pour les discours, spécialement en Actes, l'Esprit ne souffle jamais les mots! Et c'est à Pierre de les trouver. Les envoyés annoncent ainsi indirectement l'intrigue de révélation qui adviendra avec le discours de Pierre (Ac 10,28-29 et 10,34-43).

Ainsi, Corneille est présenté d'abord par le Nr, puis par les envoyés de Corneille à Pierre comme quelqu'un de bien, agréable à Dieu, mais c'est un païen et Pierre devrait refuser d'aller chez lui; car la scène avec les animaux impurs, où l'impureté alimentaire est métaphore de l'impureté des païens (qui mangent des animaux impurs) — «Comme vous le savez, c'est un crime pour un Juif que d'avoir des relations suivies ou même quelque contact avec un étranger» (Ac 10,28) —, semble appeler une issue négative. Il se rend pourtant chez Corneille sous l'ordre de l'Esprit et va, là-bas, être amené à comprendre les voies de Dieu.

4. *L'évolution intérieure de Pierre*

Lorsqu'il se trouve devant Corneille et sa maisonnée, Pierre fait état de la compréhension qu'il a désormais du dessein de Dieu: «À moi, Dieu vient de me faire comprendre qu'il ne fallait déclarer immonde ou impur aucun homme. Voilà pourquoi c'est sans aucune réticence que je suis venu quand tu m'as fait demander. Mais maintenant j'aimerais savoir pour quelle raison vous m'avez fait venir» (Ac 10,28-29). Si l'on en croit ses paroles, c'est lorsque l'Esprit lui a demandé de suivre les envoyés de Corneille qu'il a perçu le lien entre l'apparition des animaux et l'ordre d'aller chez les païens, la non-impureté alimentaire suggérée par l'apparition étant métonymie de la non-impureté universelle des païens: si l'Esprit l'a envoyé chez des païens, c'est qu'il signifie implicitement leur non-impureté. Pierre en est ainsi venu à mettre en relation ce que les deux voix avaient énoncé, à savoir le «Tue et mange» les animaux impurs et l'envoi par l'Esprit Saint chez les païens.

Si Corneille est décrit tout à fait positivement, c'est une stratégie du Nr qui «fait tout» pour qu'il soit accepté comme disciple de Jésus Christ et que Pierre accepte d'aller chez lui. Mais, lorsqu'il donne les raisons de sa présence chez un païen, Pierre ne dit rien sur ses mérites — sa générosité, ses prières, etc. — il ne retient que l'ordre céleste (10,20): «Dieu m'a montré qu'aucun homme n'est impur, c'est pourquoi je suis venu ici sans soulever d'objection». Ce n'est pas la qualité ou les mérites religieux et spirituels du païen et de sa maisonnée qui ont fait se déplacer Pierre, mais la seule directive divine. En réalité, si le Nr ne laisse Pierre dévoiler son évolution intérieure que lorsqu'il se trouve dans la maison de Corneille, c'est pour que ses auditeurs et le lecteur avec eux comprennent eux aussi que ce changement inouï — un juif strict observant de la Loi chez un païen — n'a pour seul moteur que la volonté divine. Pierre n'est pas allé chez les païens parce qu'il considérait la Loi comme dépassée ou relativisée ou parce que Corneille et sa maison méritaient plus que tous les autres païens de connaître la Bonne Nouvelle, mais parce que Dieu en avait décidé ainsi. C'est le discours qu'il tiendra devant ses frères judéo-chrétiens à son retour à Jérusalem.

Ce que Pierre comprend désormais, il l'exprime théologiquement: «Je me rends compte en vérité que Dieu est impartial» (Ac 10,34). Mais qu'entend-il par impartialité divine?

5. *Le discours et témoignage de Pierre (Ac 10,34-43)*

Ce n'est pas l'Esprit qui a soufflé à Pierre l'idée que Dieu ne «fait pas acception des personnes» (10,34), car, nous l'avons déjà signalé, dans

les Ac, l'Esprit ne dicte jamais ce que les apôtres annoncent et comprennent des voies de Dieu. C'est parce qu'il a fait le rapprochement entre l'apparition des animaux et l'ordre d'aller chez un païen qu'il a compris que Dieu était tel: s'il l'envoyait chez un païen pratiquant la justice, c'est parce qu'il voyait les cœurs et jugeait en fonction des cœurs, qu'ils soient juifs ou non. Dieu est impartial parce qu'il voit les cœurs et ne juge pas sur les apparences, et il a fait ainsi comprendre à Pierre qu'il lui fallait à son tour juger comme lui. Ajoutons que le principe d'impartialité ne va en rien contre la Loi, puisqu'il s'y trouve en toutes lettres (Dt 10,17; 16,19). Ce que le passage nous révèle, c'est que l'impartialité divine s'applique et doit s'appliquer désormais aux relations entre juifs et païens; car dire qu'un païen pratiquant la justice serait impur irait contre la justice et l'impartialité divine qui voit et juge selon les cœurs.

Dieu est ainsi intervenu pour que Pierre comprenne que les règles de kashrout et de séparation doivent désormais être interprétées et pratiquées *en relation à son impartialité*. Le mot impartial est très important car par 4 fois Pierre le mentionne comme principe herméneutique absolu (Ac 10,34-36 TOB). Quant à la venue de l'Esprit sur Corneille et les siens, elle confirme l'interprétation de Pierre: s'il tombe sur les païens, comme il tomba sur les juifs en Actes 2, *c'est bien parce qu'il manifeste et met en œuvre l'impartialité divine*. Mais alors, à quoi sert la triple vision des animaux impurs? D'abord à intriguer, à alerter Pierre. Puis après la venue de l'Esprit sur les païens, à lui montrer qu'elle exprimait de manière imagée l'universalité d'un Dieu qui, parce qu'impartial, veut le salut des hommes de toutes races et cultures. La vision venait donc indiquer quels destinataires la prophétie du Ressuscité allait toucher ⁵.

6. Extension de l'impartialité divine et nouveau kérygme

Pierre présente le kérygme d'une manière nouvelle, en fonction de ce qu'il perçoit de la nouveauté apportée par le ministère de Jésus et le rôle qu'il a désormais parce que ressuscité, parce qu'en lui l'impartialité divine s'est pleinement effectuée. Dieu a envoyé Jésus pour que tous puissent vivre le salut, et la description que fait Pierre du ministère de Jésus illustre le principe de l'impartialité divine.

La progression du passage peut se lire aisément: (i) Pierre a compris que Dieu est impartial parce qu'il l'envoie chez un païen et (ii) que s'il est envoyé, lui, chez les païens, c'est parce que Dieu a pleinement mis en œuvre son impartialité par Jésus-Christ qui a guéri tous ceux qui étaient

⁵ Cf. Ac 1,5.

asservis par la maladie, le péché, ce Jésus, mis à mort et ressuscité, qui apporte le salut de Dieu à tous, et (iii) qu'eux, les apôtres, témoins de cette impartialité, ont le devoir de la pratiquer et de l'annoncer; (iv) ils peuvent ainsi renvoyer aux Écritures qui annonçaient déjà l'impartialité divine et qui deviennent essentielles à leur propre annonce, car elles témoignent que le pardon des péchés est accordé à tous ceux qui croient en Jésus-Christ.

L'insistance mise sur l'impartialité divine est narrativement et théologiquement décisive. En effet, on aurait pu croire qu'en demandant à Pierre d'aller chez les païens, Dieu en venait à contredire les règles de kashrout et de séparation, qu'il contredisait donc la Loi qu'il avait fixée à son peuple. Or, en reconnaissant que c'est le principe d'impartialité qui explique ce changement, principe présent et essentiel dans la Loi elle-même, Pierre a compris que Dieu ne se contredisait pas, mais, parce que le temps était arrivé, le principe d'impartialité énoncé dans la Loi devait s'étendre aux Nations: en et par Jésus, Dieu révélait que son impartialité allait jusque-là et que les disciples de Jésus avaient à en témoigner. Le principe fondamental d'impartialité exigeait d'adapter, voire de ne plus tenir compte de règles qui iraient désormais contre ce principe.

7. *L'interprétation des événements pour les frères de Jérusalem (Ac 11,1-18)*

Pierre revient chez ses frères en Judée, et le Nr relate qu'ils sont choqués et scandalisés d'avoir entendu dire qu'il était allé chez des non-juifs et avait pris des repas avec eux.

Et telle est la fonction d'Actes 11. Que Pierre ait compris les voies de Dieu et y ait volontiers consenti, c'est bien. Mais cela ne suffit pas: il importe que ses frères d'origine juive puissent à leur tour faire le même chemin vers la lumière, passer de l'incompréhension à la louange. Voilà pourquoi il prend le temps de leur expliquer ce qui s'est passé et d'en fournir la clef de lecture. Il doit s'expliquer, et il ne le fait pas n'importe comment. Il commence par mentionner sa vision, avec la triple répétition de l'ordre divin, et l'explication divine («ce que Dieu a purifié, tu ne peux l'appeler 'impur'», v. 9), mais sans la commenter, sans ajouter par exemple: «le Seigneur voulait signifier que sa mort avait purifié tous les hommes sans exception», ou, comme il l'avait déjà déclaré à Corneille, en Ac 10,28: «Le Seigneur voulait me faire comprendre qu'on ne doit plus désormais dire d'un être humain qu'il est impur». En procédant ainsi, *Pierre met ses auditeurs dans la situation qui fut la sienne alors*: pour eux, la vision garde encore son secret. Ce n'est qu'ensuite, lorsqu'il mentionne

la venue de l'Esprit Saint sur les païens qu'il propose son interprétation (Ac 11,15), à savoir que Dieu est impartial parce qu'il a fait tomber l'Esprit sur les païens de la même manière qu'il l'a fait tomber à la Pentecôte sur les disciples juifs («comme [...] sur nous au commencement»; cf. Actes 2), une (double) Pentecôte annoncée par le Ressuscité en Ac 1,5, paroles dont il s'est souvenu et qu'il va citer à ses frères d'origine juive (11,16).

L'intérêt de la réaction des frères d'origine juive en Ac 11,18 vient de ce qu'ils reconnaissent les voies de Dieu, non à cause de ce qu'Il a fait *pour eux*, mais à cause de ce qu'Il a fait *pour d'autres*, ceux-là mêmes qu'on considérerait comme des pécheurs encourant la colère divine, les païens: «Ainsi, même aux Nations, Dieu a accordé la conversion pour qu'ils aient la vie» (Ac 11,18). Il y a là un réel progrès dans la louange, proclamation de la gratuité et de la gracieuseté divine, puisqu'elle ne s'applique pas seulement à ce que Dieu a fait pour son peuple, mais aussi et surtout pour les Nations. Sans doute est-ce un des fruits de l'Esprit que d'ouvrir les yeux et le cœur, autrement dit de faire comprendre les voies de Dieu et d'y faire acquiescer, en sorte que, toute jalousie éteinte, chacun puisse louer pour les dons faits aux autres ⁶.

8. *Les incompréhensions de Pierre et leur rôle*

Le lecteur l'aura noté, ce qui a frappé Pierre et ceux qui l'ont accompagné chez Corneille, c'est que des non-circoncis aient reçu l'Esprit Saint *en plénitude*, comme eux-mêmes le jour de la Pentecôte (11,15; cf. déjà 10,45.47). Or, ce n'est pas dû à la qualité spirituelle exceptionnelle de Corneille — dont le nom et les qualités ne sont même pas mentionnés —, mais à la seule impartialité divine. Et en insistant sur son incompréhension, Pierre renvoie à l'entière responsabilité divine.

Au fur et à mesure que le récit des Actes avance et se déploie, les Apôtres réalisent que Dieu veut également voir les non juifs devenir membres à part entière de l'Église. La déclaration de Pierre aux frères d'origine juive est la première à annoncer cette ouverture, et son importance vient aussi de ce qu'elle est prononcée par celui qui est le leader incontesté des disciples de Jésus, la figure dominante de la première communauté. Le Nr utilise même les incompréhensions et les objections de Pierre et des disciples pour montrer que prévaut la volonté divine. C'est à travers leurs

⁶ Sur ces différents points, Actes 9 et 10–11 articulent les mêmes composantes que Luc 1–2. Sur la fonction narrative des apparitions en Luc 1–2, voir J.-N. ALETTI, *L'art de raconter Jésus Christ* (Parole de Dieu; Paris 1989) 63–85.

réactions de surprise ou de stupeur que le récit indique comment Dieu veut que ses voies soient reconnues. En d'autres termes: l'ouverture aux païens est dans le plan de Dieu et *la reconnaissance du plan de Dieu fait partie intégrante de ce plan*. Pierre insiste en effet sur le fait que ce n'est pas lui qui voulut la conversion des païens, mais Dieu seul: «Pouvais-je, moi, m'opposer à Dieu?» (Ac 11,17). Il insiste ensuite sur l'effusion de l'Esprit, pour souligner précisément que ni lui ni personne d'autre n'aurait pu imaginer que des *goyim*, des païens, recevraient l'Esprit en abondance comme eux-mêmes, juifs et Apôtres, le jour de la Pentecôte.

Enfin, si, en Actes 10, le narrateur et les envoyés de Corneille présentent Corneille de façon positive pour que Pierre en soit impressionné et accepte d'aller chez lui, en Actes 11, le nom de Corneille n'est même plus mentionné, il rentre dans l'anonymat. Car le problème soulevé dépasse de loin la question de sa stature morale et religieuse. Il y va de la possibilité pour des non-circoncis, des non-juifs, d'appartenir à part entière au groupe des disciples et d'être appelés «frères», comme les autres, avec seulement la mention de leur origine («frères venant des Nations», Ac 15,23), sans qu'il y ait en cette appellation quoi que ce soit de péjoratif ⁷.

9. *Pourquoi Pierre — et non Paul —, fut le premier envoyé chez les païens?*

Le lecteur doit se demander pourquoi, en Actes, si c'est à Paul que fut confiée la mission auprès des païens — par le Ressuscité et par l'Église ⁸ —, le premier à leur être envoyé fut néanmoins Pierre. Ce fut sans aucun doute parce que, pour des juifs pratiquants, fidèles à la loi mosaïque, une mission chez les païens et, a fortiori, une conversion sans cette même loi, était alors impensable. Seule une figure comme celle de Pierre pouvait éteindre les résistances des frères d'origine juive. (i) Il est en effet le personnage principal d'Actes 1–12, (ii) reconnu sans contestation aucune par tous les croyants, (iii) décrit, par la *synkrisis* du Nr, comme étant la copie conforme et fiable du Christ, son Seigneur ⁹, et (iv) entièrement fidèle aux

⁷ Noter à ce propos qu'à la différence des juifs devant qui il s'explique et qui lui reprochent d'être allé πρὸς ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν ἔχοντες (Ac 11,3), Pierre évite d'appeler non-circoncis, ἀκροβυστία, ceux chez qui il fut envoyé.

⁸ Par le Ressuscité, en Ac 22,21 et 26,17-18, et par l'assemblée réunie à Jérusalem, en Ac 15,25.

⁹ Le premier à avoir montré l'importance de la *synkrisis* en Actes fut W. RADL, *Paulus und Jesus im lukanischen Doppelwerk*. Untersuchungen zu Parallelmotiven im Lukas-evangelium und in der Apostelgeschichte (Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe XXIII, Theologie 49; Bern 1975). Également J.-N. ALETTI, *Quand Luc raconte*. Le récit comme théologie (Lire la Bible 115; Paris 1998) 80-112.

traditions et commandements de la Loi. L'épisode d'Actes 10 aurait-il par ailleurs pour fonction d'abaisser Paul, de montrer qu'il n'avait pas encore la stature de Pierre pour s'imposer auprès de ses frères d'origine juive, ou plutôt de le disculper d'une initiative qui aurait été considérée comme prématurée voire irréfléchie? On ne peut dire que le Nr d'Actes veuille faire de Paul un missionnaire inférieur à Pierre, car, grâce à la *synkrisis*, il montre que Paul est à tous égards un disciple semblable à Pierre et à Jésus ¹⁰. Le Nr d'Actes ne saurait donc être incohérent lorsqu'il relate que Paul fut l'apôtre des païens — ce que confirme la deuxième partie des Actes —, mais relève que Pierre fut le premier à leur avoir été envoyé. Comme va le montrer la deuxième partie de notre exposé, loin de mettre à distance Pierre et Paul, Ac 10,1 – 11,18 renforce plutôt la façon dont l'un et l'autre voient la conversion des Nations.

II. LA CONVERSION DES NATIONS ET LA FIGURE DE PIERRE

Dans la première partie nous avons vu (i) comment, grâce au témoignage de Pierre, la conversion des premiers païens fut possible et (ii) pourquoi ce fut Pierre — et non Paul — qui, le premier, fut chargé par Dieu de la conversion de ces païens. Mais il est un silence qui doit maintenant faire l'objet de notre réflexion: à aucun moment la Loi (νόμος) n'est mentionnée en Actes 10–11. Or, pour un juif observant — et nous avons vu que Pierre l'est —, il n'y a de conversion au Dieu d'Israël qu'en vivant, en devenant sujet de la loi mosaïque. Mais si Pierre demande qu'on baptise Corneille et les siens parce qu'ils avaient pleinement reçu l'Esprit, il ne leur demande pas de devenir juifs, autrement dit de se faire circoncire pour pouvoir observer la Loi. Son attitude est tout-à-fait semblable à celle de Paul qui refusa lui aussi énergiquement que les croyants venus du paganisme devinssent juifs. Le Pierre d'Actes 10–11 semble être bien paulinien. Il va donc falloir nous interroger (i) sur l'identité de Pierre en Actes 10–11: est-il paulinien ou sera-ce Paul à être par la suite pétrinien? et (ii) nous demander ce que devient la loi mosaïque pour les disciples de Jésus, s'il est vrai que la conversion consiste à croire en Jésus, l'exécutant de l'impartialité divine, sans qu'il faille devenir juif. Mais auparavant, revenons sur la *synkrisis*, technique omniprésente en Luc/Actes, car elle seule permet de déterminer comment il faut comprendre la relation Pierre-Paul. Examinons donc les idées communes de Pierre et Paul sur la conversion des païens.

¹⁰ Pour la démonstration, voir ALETTI, *Quand Luc raconte*, 75-80 et 84-93.

1. *Pierre, Paul et la loi mosaïque*

Pierre puis Paul vont chez les païens annoncer Jésus-Christ et le salut de Dieu qu'il apporte à tous. Et ils déclarent l'un et l'autre — Pierre en Actes, et Paul en ses lettres — que les croyants venus du paganisme n'ont pas besoin d'être circoncis, position validée par l'assemblée de Jérusalem en Ac 15,1-35.

Il existe en effet de nombreux points communs entre les réactions de Pierre en Ac 10,1 – 11,18 et Actes 15, et les réflexions que Paul développe en ses lettres :

<i>Motifs communs</i>	<i>Pierre</i>	<i>Paul dans Ac</i>	<i>Paul dans les lettres</i>
Juif très observant de la Loi	Ac 10,14,28; 11,8	Ac 23,6; 23,9	Ph 3,5
Dieu, impartial, donne le salut à tous ceux qui croient en JC	Ac 10,34-43	Ac 17,30 Ac 20,21 Ac 26,20	Rm 3,20-30; 5,15 Ep 2, 11-22
Le salut est grâce, don de Dieu	Ac 10,47; 11,16-18; 15,11	Ac 22,21 Ac 28,28	Rm 3,24 Ga 3,14; 3,26-29; 4,4-7 Ep 2, 11-22
Les ex-païens ne sont pas des croyants de seconde zone	Ac 15,7-11	Ac 26,15-18	Rm 3,29-30 Ga 3,6-9
Pas besoin de circoncision pour les ex-païens	Ac 15,7-11	Ac 15, 25-29	Rm 3,20 Ga 5,2-6 Ep 2,11-22
c'est la foi et non la Loi qui rend enfant de Dieu	Ac 11,1-17 Ac 15,7-11	Ac 13,38-39	Rm 3,19,24; 9,30-33 Ga 2,16; 2,20-21; 3,11,

En Actes 10–11, Pierre a ainsi la même visée que les lettres de Paul : il ne demande pas aux païens qui viennent de recevoir l'Esprit Saint d'être circoncis et d'obéir à la Loi qui reste hors scène en ces deux chapitres. Et si Corneille et sa maisonnée n'ont pas besoin de la Torah pour obtenir le salut, cela veut dire que la foi en J.C. suffit, puisque par elle Corneille et les siens ont reçu le don de Dieu par excellence, l'Esprit Saint.

On a dit qu'en Actes 10–11 Pierre développe des idées pauliniennes. Cela est vrai dans la mesure où Actes étant écrit bien après Galates et Romains, on peut affirmer que Paul fut le premier à dire qu'il n'était pas nécessaire de devenir juif pour obtenir les bénédictions promises à Abraham. Néanmoins en Actes, ce sont les idées de Pierre qui sont les premières exposées et, durant son ministère, Paul ne fera que reprendre les idées que Pierre a énoncées avant lui. Paul, en Actes, n'est pas le premier

de cordée. En Actes, c'est Paul qui est pétrinien. Et l'on doit se rappeler pourquoi: le Nr fait tout pour exonérer Paul d'avoir pris une initiative aussi importante que celle de ne pas faire circoncire les croyants venus du paganisme. C'est pour défendre Paul et le rendre en tout semblable à Pierre — telle est l'importance de la *synkrisis* — que le Nr d'Actes procède ainsi.

Quelques exégètes ont dit et disent encore que le Paul des Actes n'est pas celui que présentent les lettres qui lui sont attribuées. De fait, Paul n'insiste pas lourdement comme en Galates et Romains sur la justification par la foi seule sans les œuvres de la Loi: Ac 13,38 est le seul verset qui parle de justification sans la Loi. C'est peu, et l'on a dit que Lc, bien que présentant un autre Paul que celui des lettres — qu'il ne connaissait pas — se devait de faire au moins une brève mention de cette si importante thèse paulinienne. Espérons que les points communs qu'Actes 10–11 ont avec les lettres de Paul montrent le contraire. Lc connaît les idées de Paul sur la justification, il les utilise tout en les attribuant à Pierre, pour les raisons qui ont été mentionnées plus haut.

Sans nous attarder sur le sujet, donnons ces raisons pour lesquelles, selon plusieurs exégètes, Actes ne mentionne pas les lettres de Paul: le Paul des Actes n'écrit pas, car il est comme Pierre qui n'écrit pas, lui non plus, tout comme le Jésus des évangiles. Ce serait donc la *synkrisis* qui serait responsable du phénomène.

2. *Quelle conversion pour Corneille et sa maison?*

Après ce détour nécessaire — la *synkrisis* Pierre/Paul et l'identité de leurs vues sur le statut des croyants venus du paganisme —, nous arrivons à la question soulevée par Ac 11,18: si pour un juif observant, la conversion passe par la circoncision et l'obéissance à la Loi, ce verset d'Actes énonce manifestement un changement de paradigme: la conversion au vrai Dieu ne passe plus nécessairement par un devenir sujet de la loi juive!

On pourrait objecter que les règles de kashrout et de séparation sont secondaires, et qu'en insistant sur l'amour de Dieu et du prochain, Paul respecte l'esprit de la Loi. Mais, pour un juif, tous les commandements de la Loi sont importants, et l'on ajoutera que les règles de kashrout et de séparation n'étaient pas (et ne sont toujours pas) secondaires dans le judaïsme, car c'étaient (et ce sont toujours) des facteurs d'identité. Les questions «que peut-on manger?» et «avec qui peut-on manger?» étaient pour cela importantes, en plus du fait qu'elles favorisaient la pureté et la sainteté que Dieu exige des croyants de son peuple. En faisant déroger en quelque sorte à ces règles les croyants d'origine païenne, Pierre et Paul

eurent donc conscience des conséquences qu'aurait leur prise de position. Mais la force du récit d'Actes 10–11 est de montrer que leur décision — ne pas faire circonscire les croyants d'origine païenne — est basée sur l'expérience de l'irruption de l'Esprit sur les païens. C'est au nom de cette expérience, et non à partir d'une désaffection ou d'un oubli de la Loi, qu'ils se prononcèrent, car seule une expérience forte et décisive pouvait autoriser un changement d'orientation.

Notons également le paradoxe sous-jacent à Actes 10–11. En ne demandant pas à Corneille et aux siens de se faire circonscire, Pierre va contre ces règles énoncées dans la Loi. Or, nous avons vu qu'il alla chez un païen parce qu'il comprit que cela n'allait pas contre le principe d'impartialité énoncé par le Deutéronome, que ce principe restait valable et couvrait toute la théologie de la Loi, mais qu'avec Jésus-Christ, ce principe d'impartialité trouvait une application jusqu'alors inédite et inouïe. C'est donc par respect de la Loi — du principe essentiel d'impartialité de la Loi — que Pierre a dérogé aux règles de kashrout de la même Loi. L'esprit de la Loi lui demandait d'aller contre la lettre de la même Loi. Et, sans le savoir ou, au contraire, en le sachant, le Nr d'Actes fait ainsi réfléchir Pierre comme le Paul des lettres pour qui la Loi a une double fonction: elle est parole divine, prophétie inaliénable et inaltérable (l'esprit de la Loi), et en même temps système législatif (la lettre) à relativiser lorsqu'il va contre le principe central d'impartialité divine.

La conversion de Corneille et des siens est ainsi une conversion sans passage par le système législatif mosaïque pour être sauvé, autrement dit, sans avoir à devenir juif. Non que la Loi soit devenue mauvaise, puisque ses principes essentiels, impartialité et amour, innervent l'agir du juif pieux et, pourquoi pas, celui du chrétien d'origine juive ou non. Mais elle n'est plus ¹¹ chemin de salut. Actes 10–11 rejoint ainsi indirectement les positions radicales de Paul, selon lequel, vouloir devenir sujet de la Loi signifie que Christ est mort pour rien (Ga 2,19-21).

Le récit d'Actes 10–11, résumé par les judéo-chrétiens de Jérusalem comme «conversion» (Ac 11,18), révèle en même temps la nouvelle extension de l'impartialité divine et la gratuité du don qu'il fait par la venue de l'Esprit Saint.

3. *La synkrisis Pierre/Paul en Actes et son interprétation*

Le Nr d'Actes montre aussi et surtout que Paul est comme Pierre. Ce faisant, il veut souligner que, bien que n'ayant pas suivi Jésus comme

¹¹ Paul dit qu'elle ne l'a jamais été. Je n'ai pas à me prononcer ici sur cette position.

Pierre, les Douze et les premiers disciples sur les routes de la Palestine du 1^{er} siècle, son témoignage a la même valeur que le leur.

Les parallèles entre Pierre et Paul en Actes ont depuis longtemps été signalés par les spécialistes. Relevons seulement ceux qui sont plus souvent mentionnés par les commentateurs ¹²:

	<i>Pierre en Actes 1–12</i>	<i>Paul en Actes 13–28</i>
<i>discours inauguraux semblables</i>	2,14-36	13,16-41
Pierre et Paul, remplis de l'Esprit Saint	2,4; 4,8	13,9
<i>ils font les mêmes signes</i>		
– guérison d'un infirme,	3,1-10	14,8-10
suivie chaque fois d'une explication	3,12-26	14,15-17
mention de la durée de la maladie	4,22 (40 ans)	14,8 (de naissance)
– exorcismes	5,16	16,16-18
– conflits avec des magiciens	Simon: 8,8-24	Elymas: 13,6-12
– résurrections	9,36-43	20,7-12
– tous les malades leur sont présentés	5,16	28,9
<i>ils ont tous deux été choisis pour évangéliser les païens</i>	10–11 (15,7)	13–28
les croyants d'origine juive rendent grâces au récit de ce que Dieu a fait en faveur des Nations	11,18	21,20
<i>visions pour l'évangélisation</i>	10,9-16	16,9
<i>ils imposent les mains</i> pour que ceux qui ont reçu le seul baptême d'eau reçoivent l'Esprit Saint	8,17	19,6
<i>emprisonnements et délivrances</i>		
emprisonnés	4,3; 5,18; 12,3-4	16,23; 21,33; 24,27
battus	5,40	16,22-23; 23,2
comparution devant le Sanhédrin et témoignage	4,7; 5,26	23,1-10
délivrance à minuit	(5,19) 12,6-11	16,25-40

En Actes 1–12, Pierre est la figure dominante du récit, même si tous les épisodes (en particulier Actes 7 et 9) ne le mentionnent pas. Il en est de même pour Paul en Actes 13–28, exception faite d'Actes 15, qui relate les délibérations et décisions des disciples réunis à Jérusalem. Voilà pourquoi les exégètes pensent que le livre suit la composition souple des cycles de l'AT, avec un tuilage permettant de souder les deux ensembles: Actes 9 préparerait le cycle de Paul, et Actes 15 serait le dernier passage où Pierre a un rôle décisif à jouer. Les parallèles du tableau entre Pierre et Paul

¹² Tableau repris chez ALETTI, *Quand Luc raconte*, 81-86.

favorisent cette hypothèse: le Paul d'Actes 13–28 est décrit comme le Pierre d'Actes 1–11. Comme ces parallèles semblent aussi le suggérer, en Actes, c'est Paul qui est pétrinien et non Pierre qui est paulinien.

CONCLUSION

Après avoir montré qu'Ac 11,18 résume avec raison la visite de Pierre chez Corneille comme conversion, il nous a fallu reconnaître que Pierre n'avait pas exigé qu'on fasse circoncire Corneille et les siens, ce qui signifiait que leur conversion ne consistait pas à devenir juifs et sujets de la loi mosaïque. Nous avons ainsi constaté que le Pierre d'Actes 10–11 avait la même position que le Paul des Protopauliniennes: fallait-il en déduire que ce Pierre-là était paulinien? Mais la *synkrisis* en Ac demande une interprétation inverse du rapport Pierre-Paul en Actes: ce n'est pas Pierre qui est paulinien, mais le Paul d'Actes qui est pétrinien, car, pour le Nr d'Actes il est essentiel que Paul soit comme Pierre.

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SUMMARY

The article shows that the narrative of Acts 10,1 – 11,18 is rightly summarized as conversion. Peter did not demand that Cornelius and his household be circumcised, which meant that their conversion did not consist in becoming Jews and subjects of the Mosaic law. With regard to the Mosaic Law the Peter of Acts 10–11 took the same position as the letters of Paul: should we infer that this Peter was Pauline? But the *synkrisis* in Acts requires a reverse interpretation of the Peter-Paul relationship: it is not Peter who is Pauline but Paul who is Petrine in the view of the Narrator.

AN APOLOGY FOR EXEGESIS OF 1 THESS 2,1-12

All indications are that Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica was brief ¹. Having come to Thessalonica with Silvanus and Timothy early in his missionary career (1 Thess 1,1; cf. Acts 17,1-10), Paul quickly succeeded in establishing a church, consisting primarily of Gentiles (1 Thess 1,9; 4,5; cf. 2,14) of the artisan class (1 Thess 4,11; cf. 2,9; 2 Cor 8,2). He left, however, as quickly as he had come. He was forced out of the city prematurely (1 Thess 2,15; cf. Acts 17,5-10) and prevented from returning, despite his efforts to do so (1 Thess 2,17-20), leaving the young church in precarious circumstances (Acts 17,5-9; 1 Thess 1,6; 2,14-16; 3,3-4).

His first letter to the church after his hasty departure could be seen as defensive, particularly in light of the circumstances ². On this point, no passage in 1 Thessalonians has received as much attention as 2,1-12. Through most of the twentieth century, a consensus held that Paul engaged in this passage in an "apology" against a specific group of opponents (Judaizers, Gnostics, Spiritual Enthusiasts, Millenarian Radicalists, etc.), in which he defended his "gospel" and his integrity as a preacher ³. However, in 1970 an important article by Abraham Malherbe (drawing upon a suggestion made by Martin Dibelius) made the case that 1 Thess 2,3-8 incorporated stock language used by philosophers who were intent upon distinguishing themselves from wandering Cynics, and that Paul's use of antithetical language was therefore preemptive and need not suggest he was responding to specific accusations. In several later publications, Malherbe would describe Paul's purposes as "parenetic", in the sense that his self-description

¹ This is the impression given in both Acts 17,1-10 and 1 Thess 2,15 – 3,10.

² I maintain the priority of 1 Thessalonians. Cf. C.A. WANAMAKER, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI 1990) 40-45.

³ Judaizers: W. NEIL, *The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians* (Naperville, IL 1957); Gnostics: W. SCHMITHALS, "The Historical Situation of the Thessalonian Epistles", in *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville, TN 1972) 128-318; spiritual enthusiasts: W. LÜTGERT, *Die Volkommenen im Philipperbrief und die Enthusiasten in Thessalonich* (BFCT 13; Gütersloh 1909) 547-654; millenarian radicalists: R. JEWETT, *The Thessalonian Correspondence. Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (FF; Philadelphia, PA 1986) 159-178. A substantial history of research can be found in J.A.D. WEIMA, "An Apology for the Apologetic Function of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12", *JSNT* 68 (1997) 73-99, who cites the above titles, among others.

aimed at providing a model of the lived-gospel for the Thessalonians to imitate ⁴. Malherbe's arguments gained quick approval, and before long a majority would acknowledge that 1 Thess 2,1-12 indeed exhibited a strong parenetic character.

Malherbe's arguments, however, did not go unchallenged. In 1997, Jeffrey Weima published his new "apology for the apologetic view", in which he challenged "the widespread consensus of interpreters today" that "the autobiographical statements of 1 Thess 2,1-12 have an exclusively parenetic function" ⁵. In support of the apologetic reading, Weima drew attention to the following elements: Paul's unusually defensive tone in 1,5; his antithetical statements in 2,1-12; his emphasis on God as a "witness" in 2,5; his inclusion of an "apostolic parousia" in 2,17 – 3,10; his remarks about the Thessalonians as "witnesses"; and the connection between 2,1-12 and Paul's review of his departure and absence in 2,17 – 3,10 ⁶. Weima concluded that "the primary function of 2,1-12 is an apologetic one" ⁷; that the "fellow-countrymen" who were harassing the church were also attacking Paul, specifically on the point of his integrity; that the community also had come to question his sincerity; and that Paul defended himself in order to reestablish their confidence in him. Weima has repeated his arguments in largely the same terms in his 2014 commentary ⁸.

Others also have called for a "return" to the apologetic view ⁹. An article by Seyoon Kim, published in 2005, argued for apologetic motives in

⁴ A.J. MALHERBE, *Paul and the Thessalonians*. The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia, PA 1987) 74; and *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B; New York 2000) 134, 155.

⁵ J.A.D. WEIMA, "An Apology for the Apologetic Function of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12", *JSNT* 68 (1997) 73-99.

⁶ WEIMA, "An Apology", 80-88.

⁷ WEIMA, "An Apology", 88.

⁸ J.A.D. WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI 2014) 120-125.

⁹ The language of "return" appears in J.R. HARRISON, "Gentle Philosopher, Rhetorician, or Selfless Benefactor? Paul's Apostolic Image and Ethos in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12", in *The First Urban Churches Vol. 7: Thessalonica* (eds. J.R. HARRISON – L.L. WELBORN) (Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming). See also S. KIM, "Paul's Entry (εἰσοδος) and the Thessalonians' Faith (1 Thessalonians 1-3)", *NTS* 51 (2005) 519-542. In fact, the "apologetic" view never disappeared entirely; see J. GILLMAN, "Paul's ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ: The Proclaimed and the Proclaimer (1 Thess 2,8)", in *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (ed. R. COLLINS) (BETL 87; Louvain 1990) 62-70, esp. 68-69; R. RIESNER, *Paul's Early Period*. Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology (trans. D. STOTT) (Grand Rapids, MI 1998) 369-370; G. FEE, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 53; J.H. MCNEEL, *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother*. Metaphor, Rhetoric, and Identity in 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8 (Atlanta, GA 2014) 32-33; L. MORRIS, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 1991) 58; G.L. GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 113-114; E. BEST, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; New York 1972; repr. 1979) 22; F.F. BRUCE, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco, TX

1 Thess 2,1-12 on the basis of the five instances in 1 Thessalonians 1–3 where Paul “connects the success of the gospel/the faith of the Thessalonians with his εἰσοδος” (“entry”, see 1,5; 1,9-10; 2,1.13; 3,6)¹⁰. According to Kim, Paul’s repeated references to his “entry” reveals a posture of defense against “those who slander him”¹¹. Paul’s slanderers denigrate him “as one of the charlatan preachers who, for money, bewitched their audience with a false doctrine camouflaged in a beguiling rhetoric”; and, drawing attention to his “abrupt escape from persecution” (Kim apparently alludes to Acts 17,6-10), they characterize him as “one of those charlatan preachers who run away from opposition”¹².

Building on these studies, James Harrison, in a forthcoming article, makes further appeal for a “return” to the apologetic view¹³. Noting that Malherbe’s focus on Paul’s language abstracts 1 Thess 2,1-12 from its historical context, Harrison argues that a different picture emerges when one looks more closely at the situation that Paul faced. Paul’s hasty departure from Thessalonica opened him up to criticism that he was a “peripatetic huckster who had hurriedly exited from the city”. Paul, therefore, engaged in this passage “in specific apologia against misrepresentations”. Harrison proposes that Paul’s rhetoric, furthermore, should be understood against the background of his local urban context, where Cynics and other missionary preachers competed for “status, honor and public recognition”. In this regard, 1 Thess 2,1-12 not only employs stock language about the true philosopher, but also the language of honor and benefaction. In short, Paul defends himself by insisting that he was *neither* like the harsh Cynics who disgracefully fled the cities when circumstances became difficult, *nor* like those city benefactors who deserted their cities in times of crisis. Rather, he was “a selfless benefactor who has honoured God”.

1982) 24, 27-28; I.H. MARSHALL, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCBC; Grand Rapids, MI 1983) 61; T.D. STILL, *Conflict at Thessalonica. A Pauline Church and Its Neighbors* (JSNTSup 183; Sheffield 1999) 145, 147; M. TELLBE, *Paul Between Synagogue and State. Christians, Jews, and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philippians* (ConBNT 34; Stockholm 2001) 99; J.M. BARCLAY, “Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity”, *JSNT* 47 (1992) 49-74, esp. 52; T. HOLTZ, “Der Apostel des Christus: Die paulinische ‘Apologie’ 1. Thess 2,1-12”, in *Als Boten des gekreuzigten Herrn. Festgabe für Werner Krusche zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. H. FALCKE – M. ONNASCH – H. SCHULZ) (Berlin 1982) 101-116.

¹⁰ KIM, “Paul’s Entry”, 519-542; citation from article abstract.

¹¹ KIM, “Paul’s Entry”, 523.

¹² KIM, “Paul’s Entry”, 527.

¹³ HARRISON, “Gentle Philosopher, Rhetorician, or Selfless Benefactor?”, with a discussion of Weima and Kim on p. 7.

I. A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

Over the course of the conversation, the interpretive options have simplified into two, categorically defined, even antithetically opposed (“not [...] but”), readings of this text: the “apologetic reading” and the “parenthetic reading”. Those who discern parenthetic purposes in this passage sometimes depict these purposes as mutually *exclusive* of apologetic purposes; thus we find interpreters using such language as “*not*” defensive “*but*” parenthetic¹⁴. Fewer, however, use this language than is sometimes claimed. In this regard, Weima has presented his argument for the apologetic view as a response to “the widespread consensus” that 1 Thess 2,1-12 has “an *exclusively* parenthetic function” (pp. 79-80); that this section functions “*only* as implicit parenesis” (article abstract), or as “*only* parenesis” (p. 86), or “*only* as implicit parenesis” (p. 98); or that it has “*only* an exemplary function” (p. 85)¹⁵. Kim characterizes the parenthetic view similarly, denying that Paul has a “*mere* paraenetic purpose” (article abstract) and referring to the “deficiencies of the widespread theories of Paul’s modeling in 1 Thess 2,1-12 and of his *mere* philophroneic purpose in 1 Thess 2-3”¹⁶. Likewise, Harrison states his dissent from the idea that this pericope is “*merely* [...] a general case of paraenetic and exemplary rhetoric”¹⁷.

While Weima presents his critique as a response to a “*widespread consensus*”, in fact most interpreters do not speak in such terms, including many of the sources he cites¹⁸. Weima states in specific reference to Malherbe’s 1970 article that Malherbe concluded that “the function of 2:1-16 is *not apologetic but parenthetic*”¹⁹, a summary also offered by Green²⁰.

¹⁴ G. LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta, GA 1985): “not for the purpose of defense but for parenesis” (185); E.J. RICHARD, *First and Second Thessalonians* (SP 11; Collegeville, MN 1995): “one is probably right in insisting that there is no polemic or apologetic motive at work here. Instead [...]” (88); K.P. DONFRIED, “The Epistolary and Rhetorical Context of 1 Thess 2,1-12”, in *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 163-194: “the narration [2,1-3,10] is neither apologetic nor polemical” (177); “not an apology of any sort” (194). Cf. D.A. DESILVA, “‘Worthy of His Kingdom’: Honor Discourse and Social Engineering in 1 Thessalonians”, *JSNT* 64 (1996) 49-79; F.W. HUGHES, “The Rhetoric of 1 Thessalonians”, in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, 94-116, esp. 97-106; A. SMITH, *Comfort One Another*. Reconstructing the Rhetoric and Audience of 1 Thessalonians (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville, KY 1995) 78.

¹⁵ WEIMA, “An Apology”. All my italics.

¹⁶ KIM, “Paul’s Entry”, 542. My italics.

¹⁷ HARRISON, “Gentle Philosopher”. My italics.

¹⁸ Especially the sources cited in WEIMA, “An Apology”, 79 n. 22. My italics.

¹⁹ WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 122. My italics.

²⁰ GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 113.

The language of mutual exclusion, however, does not occur in Malherbe's early article ²¹, and it is also lacking in many of the other examples that Weima cites ²². Moreover, among interpreters inclined to see parenetic motives in this passage, many acknowledge a complexity of motives and find the relationship between "apologetic" and "parenetic" to be too complicated to disentangle ²³. At bottom, interpreters appear to agree that, whether Paul was defending himself or not in this passage, his ultimate purpose was to assure his readers in their faith ²⁴.

²¹ The closest thing to this is his concluding remark that we "*cannot determine* from his description that he is making a personal apology" (MALHERBE, "'Gentle as a Nurse'", 217; my italics). Malherbe introduces this language in later publications (e.g., in 1987; 2000) in an apparent intensification of his earlier view; e.g., in MALHERBE, *Paul and the Thessalonians*: "[Paul's self-description is] not apologetic, but parenetic" (74); and in *The Letters to the Thessalonians*: "not in defense, but to provide in his own person an example" (134); "the antitheses [...] are paraenetic and not apologetic" (155).

²² For instance, WEIMA ("An Apology", 77-78) cites C. WANAMAKER (*The Epistles to the Thessalonians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 1990] 91). While Wanamaker, however, asserts that it is "unnecessary and unwarranted" to believe that Paul was being "maligned", he also says that, "in this *defense* [in 2,1-12]", Paul clearly faces "*accusations*" (in apparent agreement with Weima), and refers only to Paul's "*chief intention*" as parenetic; note also Wanamaker's language elsewhere: "maligned" (93); "chief intention" (93); "defense [...]" accusations" (61). WEIMA ("An Apology", 77-78) also cites R. JEWETT (*The Thessalonian Correspondence*, 73), though Jewett's remarks are more qualified than Weima suggests, as Jewett describes these verses as "not *so much* a personal defense as a *clarification* of the apostolic behavior". And while WEIMA ("An Apology", 84) says of Raymond Collins that he "denies that Paul is defending himself in 2.1-12" (citing R.F. COLLINS, *The Birth of the New Testament* [New York 1993] 22), Collins does not directly address this issue at the place cited, and this is not Collins' language elsewhere; see R.F. COLLINS, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66; Leuven 1984) 184-185.

²³ For instance, in his brief remarks on this text, David DESILVA ("Worthy of His Kingdom", 68-69, also cited by Weima as representing the anti-apology view) describes this section as a "defense" (in quotation marks), though one that serves "a larger strategy of equipping beleaguered and possibly wavering converts to continue trusting the figures who have called them" (apparently a parenetic purpose). Somewhat differently, Victor FURNISH (*1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians* [ANTC; Nashville, TN 2007] 52) concludes that, although 2,1-12 has both apologetic and parenetic elements, this section has more the aspect of "assurances given in order to strengthen the resolve of the congregation to stand firm", which Furnish considers to be more appropriately called "paracletic" than "parenetic". According to Karl DONFRIED (*Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 177), 2,1-12 focuses on Paul's "ethos", because his ethos "is closely linked with the effectiveness of the message".

²⁴ For instance, Jennifer MCNEEL (*Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother*, 31-32) is not sure we can know historically "who was saying what about Paul", but she preserves the description of this section as a "defense" (apology), while also emphasizing that this defense "serves to strengthen the Thessalonians" (parenesis). McNeel's remarks sound much like Weima's remarks, where he says that (1) Paul is here "attempting to defend himself and so reestablish the trust and confidence of his readers", and that (2) ensuring that they will obey his instructions would also "encourage the Thessalonian believers to stand firm in the midst of heavy social pressures": WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 124 n. 4; cf. IDEM, "An Apology", 99. See also HUGHES, "The Rhetoric of 1 Thessalonians", 101-102.

Relatedly, one finds instances where interpreters at first express a strong commitment to either the “apologetic” or “parenetic” reading *in name*, but then “downgrade” their level of commitment in the course of discussion, in such a way that their dissent from the opposing view becomes less pronounced. The abstract to Kim’s 2005 article, for instance, contains a somewhat obscure sentence stating that Paul had a “*comprehensive apologetic purpose* rather than a *mere* paraenetic purpose”. But what does “comprehensive” mean if it also allows for parenetic purposes? At the article’s conclusion, Kim appears to downgrade his claim, stating only that chapters 1–3 and specifically 2,1–12 “have an apologetic *element*”²⁵ — hardly an objectionable conclusion to many who take the “parenetic view”. Likewise, Weima’s admission of a “secondary” hortatory purpose in this passage is perfectly consistent with his thesis as he has articulated it — that this section does not have an “exclusively” parenetic function²⁶. Weima’s primary-secondary distinction, however, brings him closer to others than his more extreme characterization of their view — i.e., as parenetic-not-apologetic — would suggest. Weima mentions “the very real *danger in Paul’s mind* that charges of greed and self-interest *might be brought* against him”, appearing to suggest that such charges may have existed only in Paul’s mind, and perhaps, from Paul’s perspective, that they were only potential charges. Weima then goes on to note that, “in a culture where wandering preachers and sophists were widely known and criticized for their selfish motives, it is *not difficult* to see how those in Thessalonica who were opposed to the newly-established group of Christians *might* accuse their founder Paul of having less than honest intentions”²⁷.

Other qualifications in Weima’s argument further reduce differences with his dialogue partners. In his 1997 article, he conceded that charges against Paul, while “likely made,” may *not* have been made “publicly”, but that Paul may only have worried that the church “might begin to have doubts” about his sincerity²⁸. This concession is repeated later in Weima’s commentary (2014), where the following comments are added in a note: “This conclusion [that Paul ‘is in some real sense defending himself’] is still valid regardless of whether Paul is responding to actual accusations raised against him or to potential charges that he feared might be made”²⁹. Many of those who hold to the allegedly “non-apologetic” view in fact see

²⁵ KIM, “Paul’s Entry”, 542. My italics.

²⁶ WEIMA, “An Apology”, 88.

²⁷ WEIMA, “An Apology”, 97.

²⁸ WEIMA, “An Apology”, 98.

²⁹ WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 124 n. 4.

Paul responding only to *potential* charges or *potential* doubts raised in the minds of his listeners ³⁰.

The two-view approach to the passage has not only produced, at times, an *appearance* of greater disagreement than really exists; to a certain extent the frameworks themselves have *actually produced* greater divergences of interpretation. That is, the reduction of readings into two ideal types at a rhetorical level has resulted in frameworks or *summary readings* that, I hope to show below, have forced strained interpretations at the finer, exegetical level, and that have in some ways even taken the place of exegesis. The remaining purpose of this article, then, is to provide a fresh reading of 1 Thessalonians 1–3, grounded in a close exegesis, or part-by-part exposition, especially of 1,5 – 2,12, and in that light to offer some assessment of the validity of these two readings and ultimately of the two-reading approach itself.

As will be shown, a determination of Paul's motives turns upon several critical matters. (1) A determination of his motives is to a certain extent a question of where his greater *emphasis* lies. Does he place *primary* focus on the nature of his preaching or on its effect in the Thessalonians' lives? (2) The relevant issue, however, is not merely one of emphasis. It is at many points a question of *reference*. For instance, (a) in 1,5 does "power", "Holy Spirit", and "full assurance" refer to Paul's *act of proclamation*, or to its *received manifestation* in the Thessalonians' lives? Or (b) does εἰσοδος (1,5; 1,9-10; 2,1.13; 3,6) describe Paul's "arrival" as a preacher in Thessalonica, or his "visit" in a summary sense? (3) Also critical is the question whether, or to what extent, Paul presents himself here as an example to be imitated, most notably in 2,5-12 and 2,14-16. (4) Interrelated with these questions are issues regarding the logical coordination of clauses and units of thought, which require a determination of the connecting function of the conjunctions at many points across chapters 1–2 (ὅτι, καθώς, 1,5; καί, 1,6; γάρ, 1,8; γάρ, 1,9; καί, 1,9; γάρ,

³⁰ K. DONFRIED ("The Epistolary and Rhetorical Context of 1 Thess 2.1-12", in *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 163-194, esp. 163-164) has attempted to clear the air by distinguishing "three major ways" in which this text has been understood as an "apology". Definitions vary according to several factors. (1) One factor is whether the interpreter sees Paul's opponents as a *concrete group*, even if loosely defined, or as a merely hypothetical entity. (2) In some cases, "denials" of apologetic motives actually entail denials that Paul is defending himself against a *particular* group, not that he is defending himself against any group absolutely. (3) Definitions turn also on whether one sees Paul responding to *concrete accusations* directed specifically at him or as responding to generic or even hypothetical accusations. These inconsistencies explain why, as MALHERBE (*The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 153) notices, "even writers who do not think that Paul was responding to actual charges continue to speak of Paul's 'apology' or 'defense'" (Best 1972: 16-18; Palmer; Schoon-Jansen, 39-65)".

2,1; ἀλλά, 2,2; γάρ, 2,3; ἀλλά, 2,4; γάρ, 2,5; ἀλλ', 2,7; γάρ, 2,9; καί, 2,13; γάρ, 2,14), and the nature of the transitions especially across 1,4-6; between 1,4-5 and 1,6-8; between 1,6-8 and 1,9-10; and between 1,9-10 and 2,1.

II. A FRESH ANALYSIS

As interpreters widely agree, 1 Thessalonians consists of two main parts: the first encompasses chapters 1–3 and the second chapters 4–5. Regardless whether one categorizes the first unit as a “thanksgiving”, a “thanksgiving” plus a “defense”, an *exordium/narratio/transitus*, or simply a “parenthesis”³¹, it is apparent that the section is autobiographical in the sense that it is structured according to a basically chronological sequence that covers recent events in the life of Paul. Specifically, it begins with Paul’s εἰσοδος or entry into Thessalonica³² and then moves stepwise through the “history” of his relationship with the church up to the present:

- We preached the gospel / you welcomed the message (1,3 – 2,13).
- You imitated the churches in their suffering (2,14).
- We were driven away from you by the Jews who persecuted the churches (2,15-16).
- Though separated from you, we still wanted to see you (2,17-20).
- We sent Timothy to check on you (3,1-5).
- Timothy has now returned with a favorable report and we give God thanks (3,6-10).

1. 1 Thess 1,2-10

The letter-opening consists of the standard Pauline *greeting* followed by *thanksgiving* (1,1 + 1,2-10)³³. As usual, Paul thanks God for the condition of his addressees (Rom 1,8; 1 Cor 1,4; etc.). His constant mention

³¹ As thanksgiving: P. SCHUBERT, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving* (Berlin 1939) 26; JEWETT, *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, 71-72; as thanksgiving plus defense: WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 56-57; as *exordium/narratio/transitus*: WANAMAKER, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 49; as parenthesis: MALHERBE, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 74-76; IDEM, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 103.

³² The proposal of KIM (“Paul’s Entry”, 520) that Paul’s fivefold connection of his “visit” with the success of his mission is a “key to understanding Paul’s main concern and argument in 1 Thess 1–3” misses the much wider historical coverage of these chapters.

³³ Note the thanksgiving sections in Rom 1,8-15; 1 Cor 1,4-9; Phil 1,3-11; Col 1,3-14; 1 Thess 1,2-10; 2 Thess 1,3-12; Phlm 4-7; but not Galatians.

of them in his prayers consists of grateful reference to their faith, love, and hope (εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ μνημονεύοντες = “we give thanks [...] as we make mention [...]”), which things have given him assurance of their “election” (εἰδότες [...] τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν = “so that we are assured [...] of your election”). Although the thanksgiving sections in Paul’s letters typically focus on the qualities of the audience, many interpreters believe that Paul’s main focus throughout 1,4-10 is his own preaching. Whether this is correct requires serious consideration, for the question of focus in the thanksgiving is key to understanding Paul’s motives in the first unit of the letter’s body.

a. Paul’s preaching and the Thessalonians’ reception of it

The relationship between 1,4 and 1,5 is much contested, for several features here are difficult to understand: (1) the relationship between the ὅτι clause that opens v. 5 and the expression that precedes in v. 4, i.e., “knowing your election (ἐκλογήν)”; (2) whether the subjective focus of the expressions ἐν λόγῳ μόνον [...] ἐν δυνάμει [...] ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ, and [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ is Paul or whether it is the Thessalonians; and (3) the relationship between the first part of v. 5, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν [...] [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ, and the final expression, καθὼς οἴδατε οἱ τοὶ ἐγενήθημεν [ἐν] ὑμῖν δι’ ὑμᾶς. How these issues are resolved helps determine whether Paul’s focus is his *preaching* to the Thessalonians or whether it is the Thessalonians’ *reception* of his preaching.

Interpreters commonly take the focus of v. 5 to be Paul’s preaching³⁴, thus explaining the issues as follows: (1) the ὅτι clause is exegetical to “knowing your election”; (2) the terms λόγῳ [...] δυνάμει [...] πνεύματι ἀγίῳ [...] πληροφορίᾳ are subjectively focused on Paul’s activity of preaching, i.e. his “word” and its “power” as generated by the “Holy Spirit”, and the “full conviction” with which he preached; and (3) καθὼς οἴδατε οἱ τοὶ ἐγενήθημεν conveys that Paul’s “deeds were in conformity with his words”. In short, ὅτι and what follows (v. 5) indicate the *way*

³⁴ J.B. LIGHTFOOT, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul* (London 1904) 12-14; MARSHALL, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 53-54; HOLTZ, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, 46-47; G. FRIEDRICH, “Die erste Brief an die Thessalonicher”, in *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon* (eds. J. BECKER – H. CONZELMANN – G. FRIEDRICH) (DNTD 8; Göttingen 141976) 213; MORRIS, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 45-47; MALHERBE, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 112-114; GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 95-97; SHOGREN, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 63-65; WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 93, 95-96; C. MASSON, *Les Deux épîtres de Saint Paul aux Thessaloniens* (CNT XIa; Neuchâtel – Paris 1957) 20. Cf. BRUCE, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 14; G. WOHLBERG, *Der erste und zweite Thessalonicherbrief* (Leipzig 1903) 26-30.

in which, or *circumstances* under which, the Thessalonians were *elected* (v. 4)³⁵, i.e., it was by Paul's powerful preaching.

Even among interpreters who take this view, many find Paul's focus on his own preaching unexpected and awkward (an issue discerned also in v. 9), since Paul's thanksgiving sections normally focus on what God has done *in his audience*³⁶, not on what God has done in or through Paul. Weima and others explain this awkwardness as being a result of Paul's apologetic concerns, which are thought to appear more clearly in 2,1-12³⁷.

If the exegetical (or explanatory) clause in v. 5 explains the Thessalonians' "*election*", then it seems less awkward and more natural, especially in the context of an opening thanksgiving, to see the explanation as in some way elaborating on *the Thessalonians'* experience. Several items support this interpretation.

(1) While Weima appears to be correct in opposing a *causal* rendering of ὅτι on grounds that this conjunction "always appears to be exegetical" when following εἰδέναι (cf. εἰδότες, v. 4)³⁸, the exegetical reading does not in itself point to a subjective focus on Paul. Apart from one's reading of 2,1-12 in the chapter that follows, on the face of it Paul's qualification of the gospel here as "our" gospel contains nothing inherently defensive in it³⁹, for this expression is naturally understood against the background of competing "gospels", whether those proclaimed about Jesus Christ (Gal 1,6-8) or those declared by Rome and its leaders⁴⁰.

(2) Even if εἰς ὑμᾶς means "to you" (rather than "in you"), this determination does not answer whether the originating/deictic viewpoint is *near* ("coming *from*" Paul to the Thessalonians) or *far* ("going *to*" the Thessalonians from Paul).

(3) More determinative for the meaning of v. 5 is the conceptual function of the ὅτι clause. This clause "explains" Paul's assurance of the Thessalonians' "*election*" more directly if it explains not the intermediate means of the Thessalonians' election (Paul's preaching) but the very

³⁵ So LIGHTFOOT, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, 12; GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 93; MALHERBE, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 110; WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 93.

³⁶ See n. 33.

³⁷ WEIMA, "An Apology", 80, 81; IDEM, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 93, 96, 107 (concerning 1,9); cf. HOLTZ, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, 46.

³⁸ WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 93.

³⁹ Pace WEIMA, "An Apology", 80; IDEM, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 92-93.

⁴⁰ The latter may be acutely relevant for the new believers in the imperial province of Macedonia. See J.R. HARRISON, "Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki", *JSNT* 25 (2002) 71-96, esp. 89. The reason for this particular expression here may be due to the Thessalonians' present situation, in which they face persecution, likely, for their loyalty to Christ over against Rome and the Roman emperor.

manifestation of their election in their lives (how his “word” was *received in them*). In other words, as a result of their faith, love, and hope (v. 3), Paul has become sure of their election (v. 4), knowing, based on their work, that his message was not just received by them nominally but was received in them deeply, indeed “powerfully”, “with manifestation of the Holy Spirit”, and with their “full assurance” (v. 5).

(4) The final portion of the verse is not best understood as indicating that Paul was sincere, i.e., living just as he preached. It was indeed a commonplace among the moral philosophers that one’s “words” should be in conformity with one’s “deeds” (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 49; Musonius Rufus, *Diatr.* 1; 8)⁴¹. This, however, is not evidently the sense here. In the first place, according to that reading Paul would be delivering a *powerful message* and living in an *upright manner*. Such a construal, however, does not create a neat parallel between words and deeds in the sense that one is *doing* what one is *saying* (e.g., in the way that the one who says not to commit adultery does not himself commit adultery). Second, καθώς (“just as”) expresses a more exact analogy if it compares not *words and deeds* but rather *deeds and deeds*: on the one hand, the manner of life lived by the *Thessalonians* (consistent with their election) after they received Paul’s message, and on the other hand, the manner of life *Paul* lived out while he was among them⁴². In short, Paul’s meaning is that they had received the gospel in such a way that it manifested itself in their lives, just as it had manifested itself in his own life. This connection neatly anticipates what is said next in v. 6.

b. The Thessalonians’ reception of Paul’s preaching and their imitation of him

If v. 5 is defensive, this makes for a surprising transition into v. 6, for, as Weima notes, Paul apparently now “leaves his apologetic concern behind”⁴³. Indeed, the opening καί is fairly unexpected on that reading, which may explain why it is sometimes left untranslated⁴⁴. J.B. Lightfoot saw καί introducing a “second” way in which the Thessalonians’

⁴¹ This reading is suggested by GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 96; MALHERBE, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 113.

⁴² The view of KIM (“Paul’s Entry”, 521 n. 3) that the clause is “causal” and explains that Paul’s conduct (“of what kind we became”) was the cause of his missionary success (the effectiveness of his message) is not in keeping with the usual semantics of καθώς. The “causal” sense of the conjunction arises out of the idea of proportion (“in so far as”, “to the extent that”, “in just the same measure as”), which does not support Kim’s connection.

⁴³ WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 96.

⁴⁴ E.g., MORRIS (*The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 45, 47), who takes this reading.

election evinced itself: first through the divine character of Paul's message ("with power", etc.), and second by their sincere acceptance of it ("and you became imitators")⁴⁵. The syntax running from "your election" into "and you became imitators", however, lacks the kind of cohesion needed to make this interpretation convincing, for the two supposed reasons then become poorly balanced, i.e., moving from an exegetical clause in the first instance ("knowing your election, *that* [...]") to a new assertion in the second ("and you became imitators"). The καί is better viewed as linking two *equal* items: Paul's conduct ("of what kind *we* became") and the Thessalonians' conduct ("and *you* in turn became *imitators* of us") — a reading supported further by the final parallel between ἐγενήθημεν (v. 5b) and ἐγενήθητε (v. 6a). In this way, the transition from v. 5a to 5b is, now in v. 6, restated and clarified: "you lived as if having received the gospel powerfully in your lives (5a), just as we so lived (5b), and in this way you became imitators of us (6a)".

Paul next specifies *how* the Thessalonians had imitated him (and the Lord as well): in enduring suffering with joy (v. 6b). The result (ὥστε) of such conduct, as stated in v. 7, was that they became an example (τύπον) to believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia, who then reported about the Thessalonians throughout far-flung regions, so that no need was left for Paul to repeat the story (v. 8). Beginning from v. 4 (the Thessalonians' "election") and reaching all the way through v. 8, then, the conduct of the Thessalonians has remained continuously in view. Where Paul introduced his own manner of living in v. 5b, it was only to draw a comparison with the Thessalonians as mentioned in v. 5a: their lives were like his. He then further elaborates on their lives in what immediately follows, from vv. 6 through 8.

c. The Thessalonians as examples and the Thessalonians' faith

Many interpreters see in v. 9a a transition back to Paul's preaching and conduct ("our visit to you"), before another transition from Paul back to the Thessalonians in v. 9b ("and how you turned"), introducing the same kind of "awkward" transition that many have discerned both between vv. 4 and 5 and between vv. 5 and 6⁴⁶.

Such an interpretation of the transition is not only awkward but it also inadequately accounts for γάρ at the opening of the verse. In v. 8 it is not the report about Paul's *preaching* that has "rung out" (ἐξήχηται) across Macedonia and Achaia and every place, but the report about

⁴⁵ LIGHTFOOT, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, 14.

⁴⁶ Noted again by WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 107.

the Thessalonians' cruciform *example*, i.e., their embodiment of the word of the Lord. In this regard, v. 9 elaborates on the report about the Thessalonians that has spread abroad, as stated in v. 8. What the Macedonians and the others "declare" constitutes the very "word" that "rang out" in the form of the Thessalonians' cruciform example. Having then a simple connection between the *report about their faith* (v. 8) and *the faith that was reported* (v. 9), it seems an unnecessary stretch to see the report about the *Thessalonians' faith* (v. 8) as being grounded by a declaration about *Paul's preaching* (v. 9) ⁴⁷. The latter reading would yield, in sum: "They report about *your faith* everywhere, *for* (γάρ) they talk about how *we preached*." Even if the grounds expressed in v. 9 are seen as including two separate ideas — *Paul's preaching* and conduct on the one hand (they report "what kind of visit we had") and (καί) the *Thessalonians' reception* of it on the other ("how you turned to God") — this still leaves "awkward" the way in which the first half (Paul's preaching) provides *grounds* for what precedes (the report about the Thessalonians' faith) ⁴⁸. It is less awkward, and better, to see the two clauses together that comprise the indirect question (ὁποῖαν and following) as being roughly synonymous, and the καί not as additive ("in addition") but as explicative: "what kind of visit we had, *and specifically* (καί), how you turned to God" ⁴⁹.

d. The Thessalonians' faith and Paul's εἴσοδος

If v. 9 concerns the content of the Thessalonians' faith, why does Paul refer here to his εἴσοδος? The debate whether this means "visit" or "reception" oversimplifies the issue. Etymologically the noun conceptualizes movement of a subject *toward* (εἰς) something. However, the action implicit in the noun could be conceptualized as either *durative* (a visit conceived in terms of its unfolding events) or *constative* (a visit conceived as a whole event that happened). As such, the word could focus on what Paul went about doing while he was there (preaching and conducting himself in a certain manner), or it could focus on the visit simply as an accomplished whole, including the outcome of the event. In light of the interpretation of vv. 5-8 offered above, the latter is more likely the sense. The Macedonians announce the impact that Paul's "visit" had on the Thessalonians: they became an example to all.

⁴⁷ Which is the result of KIM's reading ("Paul's Entry", 520-521).

⁴⁸ WINTER, "The Entries", 64-65; and apparently WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 108.

⁴⁹ See BDAG, 495; meaning 1.c.

e. Summary

The Thessalonians' faith and example remain the central focus throughout the thanksgiving section. Paul thanks God for their faith, hope, and love (v. 3), by which he has been assured of their election (v. 4), and for the fact that their faith was not a nominal faith but a working faith (v. 5a). With the effective power of the gospel in their lives, they not only became imitators of Paul (v. 6) — in whose life also the gospel had become effective (v. 5b) — but in turn also became examples to the other churches (vv. 7-8). Indeed, the churches far and wide declared what kind of faith the Thessalonians embodied as a result of Paul's visit (vv. 9-10).

2. 1 Thess 2,1-12

In 2,1 begins the letter's body proper. The first main unit (2,1-12) connects closely with the preceding thanksgiving and reprises many of the same themes introduced there, including, most centrally, the connection between Paul's preaching and the Thessalonians' faith.

a. The Thessalonians' faith and Paul's εἰσοδος

With the close of the thanksgiving section and the opening of the letter's body in 2,1, Paul again makes reference to his εἰσοδος. It would be possible at this point to see Paul now putting his preaching in direct focus. In light of the connecting γάρ, however, this reading is difficult to justify⁵⁰. If Paul now shifts focus to his preaching, the thematic jump from the Thessalonians "turn" to God would require that γάρ ground not what was said in vv. 9b-10 but what (some claim) was said in 1,9a, or still further back, in 1,5⁵¹ — hardly a natural train of thought.

While the similarity of language in 2,1a to that in 1,9a could justify a direct logical connection between these two texts (compare αὐτοὶ γὰρ περὶ ἡμῶν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὁποῖαν εἰσοδὸν ἔσχομεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς with αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἰσοδὸν ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς)⁵², a *logical* connection of this kind would introduce problems. First, it is difficult to accept that 2,1 grounds only one of the two coordinate reasons given in v. 9 for

⁵⁰ The difficulty of the connection may explain the neglect of explicit comment on the conjunction in the commentaries, as well as its occasional omission from translations and proposals that it here has an anomalous meaning. Note the silence on γάρ in LIGHTFOOT, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, 16; and the decision to leave γάρ untranslated in SHOGREN, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 90, and GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 93-97, 114-115. According to G. MILLIGAN, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London 1908) 16, γάρ here "almost = 'however'!"

⁵¹ WINTER, "The Entries", 64-65.

⁵² KIM, "Paul's Entry", 521.

Paul's respite from speaking, and moreover, the more *distant* reason ("what kind of visit we had to you") rather than the nearer one ("how you turned to God"). Second, such an interpretation repeats the kind of stretch made with regard to γάρ in v. 9, where a report about *Paul's* preaching and conduct is made to ground the report about the *Thessalonians'* faith. The remainder of 2,1-12 cannot be allowed to determine the connection, particularly with these counter considerations in play ⁵³.

While Paul will come to his preaching and conduct in short order (vv. 3ff), a natural construal of the syntax in 2,1 would be to see Paul at this point offering grounding for what he has said specifically about the Thessalonians in vv. 9-10, who have been the continuous focus since 1,2. Such a connection avoids the charge of awkwardness in the supposed movement between Paul's preaching and the Thessalonians' faith, and the need to connect 2,1, out of all that has been said, with 1,5 and 1,9a in isolation. In this respect, Paul's reminder now about what "you *your-selves* know" grounds the comments *he* had made about the Thessalonians in the thanksgiving proper — where he had given thanks "concerning all of [them]" (v. 2) — as well as his remarks about their "faith, love, and endurance of hope" (v. 3); their "election" (v. 4); their active response to his message, which manifested itself in them "just as" the gospel had manifested itself in him (v. 5); their imitation of Paul and the Lord (v. 6); and their example to others (v. 7), which *the churches* have reported everywhere (v. 8), and which concerned their ready acceptance of Paul's message embodied in their "turning to God from idols" (vv. 9-10). What is said in 2,1, then, confirms the facticity of their transformation by calling upon *their own recollection* of it. In short, not only do *the other churches declare* the impact of the gospel on the Thessalonians (1,8-10) but likewise *the Thessalonians themselves also know* how it has impacted them (2,1).

That εἰσοδος again has in view the Thessalonians' *reception* of Paul's message is shown by the remainder of vv. 1-2. In the first place, while the term κένοϛ had some currency in reference to "rhetoric" that was "empty" or "insubstantial" ⁵⁴, this was not the usual sense of the term; nor is this generally its sense elsewhere in Paul's letters (1 Cor 15,10. 14[2×].58; 2 Cor 6,1; Gal 2,2; Phil 2,16[2×]; 1 Thess 3,5); nor is it the sense in chapter three of the present letter (1 Thess 3,5). The usual emphasis of the term, on what is "without effect", is here consistent with what Paul has already said: the Thessalonians' faith has manifested itself in an

⁵³ WANAMAKER, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 91.

⁵⁴ MALHERBE (*The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 136) cites Plutarch, *Adul. amic.* 59CD; note also Eph 5,6; Col 2,8.

exemplary way ever since the time they received the “word” (1,5). Further supporting this interpretation, the perfect tense of the verb γέγονεν shows that Paul’s assertion about his visit concerns a present-completive state, or in other words, the existing *results* of the visit, not just the events (or preaching) that took place during the visit — a point generally passed over in the literature ⁵⁵. In other words, his visit “*has not been without effect*”.

b. Why Paul’s εἶσοδος was “not without effect”

Coming to v. 2, Weima proposes that Paul contrasts the negated assertion that his preaching was “*empty*”, as stated in v. 1, by now stressing that he would not have endured the opposition he had if he preached out of *insincerity* ⁵⁶. Based on the more probable sense of οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν in v. 1, however, it seems better to see v. 2 as responding to the negated outcome that Paul has just denied: that is, a *fruitless* visit would be a possible outcome under certain circumstances, but (ἀλλά) he had “preached boldly *with much struggle*” ⁵⁷, thus assuring his (or the gospel’s) success. In this way Paul presents himself not only as struggling but also, like an athlete who overcomes his obstacles, as having struggled his way to *victory* ⁵⁸. The athletic metaphor lends further support to a reading of κενὴ in reference to *results*, for Paul himself very clearly brings these ideas together in Gal 2,2: “lest I run or already ran *to no effect* (εἰς κενόν)”.

Now in v. 3, Paul at last shifts the focus to his own activity. On one reading, γάρ here introduces proof of Paul’s *motives*, i.e., supporting the claim that his message had been sincere (not “empty”) ⁵⁹. His sincerity is surely implied, though the connections in the text show that this is not his main point. His point is that it was “the gospel of God” that he had preached. In this regard, v. 3 offers evidence that the message that his audience had heard was in fact *God’s* gospel. The claim is not so much that the message *derived* from God, as that the message (which he takes for *granted* originated from God) has been *preserved* in its pure and undefiled, i.e., its received, form. This interpretation is borne out as Paul

⁵⁵ WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 130-131; MALHERBE, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 135-136; cf. GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 114-115.

⁵⁶ WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 131.

⁵⁷ Which does not, for Paul, cancel out the agency of God, as ἐν τῷ θεῷ shows.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8; Seneca, *Ep.* 78.16; Wis 4,2; 4 Macc 6,10-12; Philo, *Spec.* 2.183; *T. Job* 3,10-11; 27,3-5.

⁵⁹ WANAMAKER, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 94; WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 134; MALHERBE, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 138; GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 115; MORRIS, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 61; MARSHALL, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 62-63.

proceeds. As he stresses in 2,4, he preserved and spoke precisely the message with which he had been entrusted: “*just as* we were entrusted (καθὼς δεδοκιμάσμεθα), *so* we speak (οὕτως λαλοῦμεν)”. Since Paul introduces his claim via contrast (ἀλλά), it is apparent then that v. 3 indicates the *counter* situation — in which the message (*presumptively* from God) is theoretically relayed in error, whether intentionally (ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας [...] ἐν δόλῳ) or unintentionally (ἐκ πλάνης). Paul denies both possibilities. The success of his preaching in Thessalonica, in short, was guaranteed by the very fact that its content was “the gospel of *God*,” which is inherently powerful and effective to produce faith ⁶⁰.

c. The function of Paul’s denials

The “denials” that extend from v. 3 through v. 6 constitute an important argument for an apologetic reading of 2,1-12, and an argument that (despite warnings about “mirror-reading” from antithetical statements) ⁶¹ is not in principle illegitimate. The evidence adduced by Malherbe that these verses incorporate the stock language of philosophers intent on distinguishing themselves from charlatans and other preachers of that environment is compelling rhetorically, although it leaves open the possibility that Paul was, not just in theory, but *in fact* responding to the charges that people commonly made against such individuals. On the other hand, one could raise doubts as to whether denials, even emphatic ones, necessarily imply a defense given in response to criticisms that have been voiced. It was a common point in rhetorical theory that the use of contrast through devices like negation, antonymy, and antithesis was one means of amplifying what one wanted to assert ⁶². One might note, for a clear example in Paul’s letters, the love-hymn of 1 Cor 13,4-8, where Paul amplifies the personified concept of Love through a series of denials (“love is *not* envious, it does *not* boast, it is *not* puffed up, etc.”). There would be no sense in deducing that anyone had accused “Love” of *not* being that way. Rather, the denials serve to imply that *some* people are that way, though love is not, so that love stands out all the more by means of contrast.

The relevance of rhetorical theory comes in also when evaluating Paul’s invocations of God as his “witness” (vv. 5, 10). While it is true that such formulas as “God is my witness” reflect a practice, discussed in the

⁶⁰ Note also Rom 1,16; 1 Cor 2,1-5.

⁶¹ Due largely to G. LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta, GA 1985), whose caution was dialed back by J.M. BARCLAY, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case”, *JSNT* 31 (1987) 73-93.

⁶² AUNE, *The New Testament*, 206.

rhetorical handbooks, of appealing to “divine testimony”⁶³ in forensic settings, it is equally true that such declarations could be employed as an “emotive figure”, and could be somewhat feigned⁶⁴. The sympathetic reader might be slow to ascribe such pretenses to Paul; yet, Paul himself shows that he could speak in this way for emotive effect, as Phil 1,8 illustrates: “*For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Jesus Christ*”. The invocation of God in 1 Thess 2,5.10 seems more calculated to amplify the intensity of his assertion than to defend himself against accusations that he was insincere.

d. Paul’s self-portrayal as example

As to the letter of the text, Paul nowhere in vv. 5-9 asks the Thessalonians to follow his example⁶⁵. Malherbe demonstrates that 1 Thessalonians as a whole has strong parenetic intentions, and draws attention to several passages where Paul appears to be appealing to his own good example, though Malherbe points in 2,1-12 only to the example of Paul’s “boldness” (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα, 2,2)⁶⁶. It is seldom noted, however, that vv. 5-9 describe Paul in a way consistent with his picture of “cruciformity”, i.e., that way of life characterized by the abnegation of honor as reckoned by the world’s standards and by a lowering of the self for the benefit of others, in imitation of Christ.

Paul’s self-depiction in these verses highlights these qualities in several ways. Despite multiple exegetical difficulties, including a crucial textual variant, vv. 5-7 are best seen as presenting a contrast between Paul’s right to exploit the honor he and his companions are due “as apostles of Christ” and his determination to waive that right and to act instead as “children in your midst”⁶⁷. Paul’s remarks in this regard do not concern strictly financial matters (cf. 1 Cor 9,6-18) but concern rather social status and personal prestige more generally. He was not sycophantic (ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας), nor opportunistic (ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας), as he did not seek renown (δόξαν) from any human being, although he and his companions were able to call attention to their importance (δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι) as apostles of Christ⁶⁸.

⁶³ M.V. NOVENSEN, “‘God Is Witness’: A Classical Rhetorical Idiom in Its Pauline Usage”, *NovT* 52 (2010) 355-375.

⁶⁴ Cf. LAUSBERG, §§352-353; 758; 760; 808-809.

⁶⁵ WEIMA, “An Apology”, 88; GREEN, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 113.

⁶⁶ A.J. MALHERBE, “Exhortation in First Thessalonians”, *NovT* 25 (1983) 238-256, esp. 248-249.

⁶⁷ I take Silvanus and Timothy to be at least nominally included in the plural.

⁶⁸ βαρέος here refers to “importance”, “weight”, or “dignity” (cf. BDAG, 167, meaning #2).

This interpretation makes quite comprehensible the reading of νήπιοι (P⁶⁵ x* B C D), as against ἡπιοι (x² A C² D²), in the next clause ⁶⁹. While one could locate the emergent contrast in the difference between *rhetorical guile* and *childlike innocence* (νήπιοι) ⁷⁰, the childlike quality alluded to refers more likely to the quality of *lowliness*. Specifically, Paul renounces sycophancy and opportunism because he is not intent on acquiring *honor* (δόξαν) ⁷¹. He does not even exploit the honors he is due by virtue of his apostolic rank. This interpretation is confirmed by an oddity of speech that has received virtually no attention: Paul and his companions became children “*in your midst*” (ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν). Stated in this way and in the context of Paul’s emphasis on renunciation of honor, it is hard to resist the conclusion that he alludes to one of Jesus’ logia about children recorded in the gospels. In conversing with his disciples, Jesus is said to have placed a child “*in their midst*” precisely to illustrate who is the “*greatest*”; the answer given is that the greatest is the one who is the “*least*” (cf. Matt 18,2-3; Luke 9,47-48; 22,25-27) ⁷².

Paul’s ensuing self-description follows in the same vein: he treated the Thessalonians as a “*nurse*” (τροφός) treats her own children. While the social status associated with nurses varied widely ⁷³, the context here suggests that Paul deliberately selects an image that upsets conventional social hierarchies ⁷⁴ and that places him in a *servile* position.

Paul further highlights his self-giving on behalf of the church in 2,8 and 2,9. He had “*given his very life to them*”, holding nothing back. His voluntary undertaking of manual labor “*so as not to burden*” them, as γάρ shows in 2,9, constituted one of the very ways in which he had spent himself. Here again, it is his social status that is at stake. While it was

⁶⁹ The arguments of T.B. SAILORS (“*Wedding Textual and Rhetorical Criticism to Understand the Text of 1 Thessalonians 2.7*”, *JSNT* 80 [2000] 81-98) and J.A.D. WEIMA (“*But We Became Infants among You*: The Case for ΝΗΠΙΟΙ in 1 Thess 2.7”, *NTS* 46 [2000] 547-564) in advocacy of this reading are decisive; not surprisingly, a majority of interpreters now prefer this reading, as observed by N. GUPTA, *1-2 Thessalonians* (New Covenant Commentary Series; Eugene, OR 2016) 114.

⁷⁰ MCNEEL, *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother*, 55; WEIMA, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 145; cf. SAILORS, “*Wedding Textual and Rhetorical Criticism*”, 91-92.

⁷¹ In this way, his repudiation of honor-seeking explains (γάρ) “*not as if pleasing humanity*”.

⁷² ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν (Matt 18,2-3); ἐν ὑμῖν (Luke 22,25-27); παρ’ ἐαυτῶ, ἐν πᾶσιν ὑμῖν (Luke 9,47-48). Among ancient interpreters, Origen (*Comm. Matt.* 13.29) and Augustine (*Tractates on John* 7.23.4) also appear to make this connection.

⁷³ MCNEEL, *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother*.

⁷⁴ GAVENTA (*First and Second Thessalonians*, 30) notes that with Paul’s use of maternal imagery he “*voluntarily hands over his place in the conventional gender hierarchy*”. Note also that nurses were often deprecated as poor, uneducated, and unsophisticated (see, e.g., Plato, *Rep.* 2.377c2-4; cf. Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 1.1.4).

the livelihood of most of the population (including day-laborers, artisans, and slaves), manual labor was considered beneath the dignity of the educated and carried with it a stigma that was assigned to the majority by the only ones whose reckoning of status counted: the elite ⁷⁵.

The ethos that Paul ascribes to himself in vv. 5-10, in short, exemplifies well that “mind that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2,4-10), which very “mind” Paul often exhorted his listeners to emulate (Phil 2,5; 1 Cor 4,16; 11,1; 1 Thess 1,6; Phil 3,17).

Finally, Paul recalls in vv. 10-12 how his behavior in their midst served directly for their benefit. A parallel in thought appears here that is easy to miss. The Thessalonians:

- (1) are (a) “witnesses” (b) of his “holy and righteous and blameless” conduct, “*just as*”
- (2) they (a) “know” how (b) he had personally instructed them.

Linked in this way, these two units lead together into the purpose construction that articulates the *end* toward which Paul had so expended himself: he had conducted himself that way “*so that you* might walk worthily of the God who is calling you into his kingdom and glory” (v. 12).

e. Summary

1 Thessalonians 2,1-12 reprises the emphasis found in the thanksgiving section on the visible effects of Paul’s visit in the Thessalonians’ lives (vv. 1-2). These effects were to be expected, since the message was God’s own and Paul had preserved it as received, unaltered and undefiled (vv. 2-4). Paul next reminds the Thessalonians that when he was among them, he had not sought honor, nor exploited his dignity as an apostle of Christ, but as one who had conducted himself in the manner of a lowly child and a humble caretaker (vv. 5-8) who voluntarily took on the menial role of a manual laborer for the Thessalonians’ benefit (v. 9). In all of these ways he presents himself as a model of cruciformity — a model of the way of Christ — to be imitated by the Thessalonians. All of these things he did so that they, in witnessing a human embodiment of Christ’s ways, might do likewise and so enter God’s kingdom and glory (vv. 10-12).

3. 1 Thess 2,13-16

Paul now renews his thanksgiving. As in the first thanksgiving section (1,2-10), the emphasis here falls on the visible effects of the gospel in

⁷⁵ Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.4.22; Cicero, *Off.* 1.150-151; Lucian, *Somn.* 13; *Fug.* 17; *Vit. auct.* 11.

the Thessalonians' lives. Seyoon Kim's struggle to keep Paul's preaching as the point of emphasis results again in what is surely an uncharacteristic Pauline thanksgiving, putting as it does the focus on what Paul himself has done rather than on what God has done in his listeners. Apart from this issue, Kim's reading also renders the assertion of thanks unnecessarily complex: Paul "thanks God for the fact that he faithfully discharged his divine commission to preach the gospel [...] because it has brought about the real reason to thank God, namely, that the Thessalonians came to accept his message" ⁷⁶. This hardly captures Paul's directness. The content of v. 13 initially replicates the points made in 1,2-10 and 2,1-12: (1) the Thessalonians earnestly received the gospel; (2) this resulted in action (1,5; 2,1; 2,13); (3) these results happened because they received the message as a message from God (2,2-4; 2,13). As in 2,2, the final point in 2,13 is calculated not so much to reaffirm Paul's *sincerity* as to account for the *success* of the mission. The gospel of God is inherently powerful. It produces results. Paul thanks God that it did.

Still, Paul's renewal of thanksgiving carries his initial points further, now introducing *additional* grounds for thanksgiving ("And we give thanks also [...]", v. 13). Verse 14 confirms that the Thessalonians' "reception" of the gospel and the gospel's corresponding "work" in them is Paul's opening emphasis, for the introductory γάρ shows that the ensuing elaboration on the Thessalonians' endurance of suffering explains the content of v. 13. That is, their endurance under suffering is proof (γάρ) that the gospel has worked effectively in their lives. The change of focus, at last, to Paul in v. 16 communicates that the Thessalonians' experience paralleled his own (cf. 1,5), which is to say that he has suffered for his faith just as they have for theirs.

4. 1 Thess 2,17 – 3,13

Finally, Paul moves to the most recent stage in the history of his relationship with the Thessalonians. Having recalled first their reception of his message at his initial visit (1,3 – 2,13), their imitation of the churches in their endurance of suffering (2,14), and his forced exit from their midst (2,15-16), he comes now to their separation (2,17-20), his two failed attempts to return to them, his sending of Timothy as his surrogate (2,17 – 3,5), and finally Timothy's return and his own relief upon receiving a favorable report (3,6-10).

⁷⁶ KIM, "Paul's Entry", 522.

One may surmise that Paul's hurried exit from the city may have raised doubts as to the genuineness of his concern for his young converts. Whether or not Timothy carried back reports of such concerns, Paul might have suspected such sentiments. Harrison, among others, has pointed to Paul's exit as perhaps one of the chief accusations that had been made against him: he had abandoned his converts when things took a turn for the worse. Weima sees this supposition as explaining Paul's inclusion here of what Robert Funk has called the "apostolic Parousia" form, in which Paul, in his absence, uses a letter to bring forth his personal presence and especially his apostolic authority⁷⁷. According to Weima, Paul invokes his "absent presence" here in order to reassure the church of his love for them after leaving them orphaned and in jeopardy⁷⁸.

Paul's reaffirmations of love, however, are indecisive as evidence of defensiveness, since this passage reflects, perhaps more densely than anywhere else in Paul's letters, the stock language and clichés characteristic of "personal" letters in the Hellenistic world. Such features include: Paul's desire to see his addressees (2,17-18); his reminder that they are separated in body but not in spirit (2,17); his reassurance of his affection for them despite his absence (2,17); his expression of joy over their well-being (3,10.12); mention of their mutual love (3,12); and his acknowledgement that they would like to see him too (3,6)⁷⁹. As these features are conventional in ordinary correspondences between intimates, they have only a neutral value as evidence of Paul's motives. If Paul's tone is indeed defensive, this would be more easily inferred from the circumstances of his departure than from his personal style of address.

But it is quite unjustified to see, as Kim does, Timothy's positive report about the Thessalonians (3,6) as consisting of assurance that the Thessalonians "are withstanding the opponents' slander campaign against Paul's εἰσοδος quite well"⁸⁰. In Paul's very own words, the reason he had sent Timothy was "*in order to* strengthen (εἰς τὸ στηρίξει) and encourage (παρακαλέσαι) you on behalf of your faith *so that* no one is shaken (σαίνεσθαι) in *these afflictions*" (3,2-3; using infinitival purpose constructions). Next, based on what Paul says in v. 6, it was Timothy's report that

⁷⁷ R.W. FUNK, "The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance", in *Christian History and Interpretation*. Studies Presented to John Knox (eds. W.R. FARMER – C.F.D. MOULE – R.R. NIEBUHR) (Cambridge 1967) 249-269.

⁷⁸ WEIMA, "An Apology", 81-83.

⁷⁹ H.-J. KLAUCK, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*. A Guide to Context and Exegesis (Waco, TX 2006) 188-193; MALHERBE, "Exhortation in First Thessalonians", 241; *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 180-181.

⁸⁰ KIM, "Paul's Entry", 533.

their “faith” and “love” were strong that filled Paul with assurance (3,6). Furthermore, it reflects little sensitivity to the context to conclude that the temptation of the “Tempter” (3,5) consisted in his trying “to dissuade the readers from their new faith *by denigrating his [Paul’s] εἰσόδος*”⁸¹. Paul had sent Timothy to strengthen their faith “lest” (μή πως) the temptation lead them astray and cause Paul’s work to have been in vain. The impetus for Paul’s fear, and thus his reason for sending Timothy, was their “affliction” (vv. 3, 4), as Paul makes quite explicit (“for this reason,” διὰ τοῦτο), and not attacks on his own “entry”. In short, it was patently their affliction that he feared would undermine their faith.

The final words of chapter 3 (vv. 11-13) express a wish that the Thesalonians may continue to grow in love and strength of heart in preparation for the Parousia of Jesus.

III. CONCLUSION

A close look at the interpretation of 1 Thess 2,1-12 over the last fifty years reveals a conversation characterized by contrast. It has become common to describe Paul’s motives as either “parenthetic” or “apologetic”, even using the language of mutual *exclusion*. This polarizing tendency has not only led to interpreters’ misunderstanding, and occasional misrepresentation, of each other; it has also served to construct “frameworks” that have to a considerable extent driven interpretation of this passage at some expense to exegesis. A fresh interpretation of 1 Thess 1,2 – 3,13 has been offered here, which has prioritized the logic of the text, including attention to the finer points of syntax as well as the text’s overall structure and unfolding progression.

The main contribution of our exegetical analysis can now be summarized. While it has not been our purpose to settle the choice between “the apologetic” and “the parenthetic” reading of the passage *as a whole* (which is not as simple as this framing makes it sound), the outcomes of our exegetical analysis are found to undermine an apologetic interpretation *at many specific points* throughout the text, particularly when attention is paid to the logical coordination of clauses and the nature of key transitions (e.g., the transitions in vv. 4-6; the transition between vv. 8 and 9; the transition between 1,9-10 and 2,1; among other places). Our judgments at these points, moreover, have led us to a different understanding of the logical flow of Paul’s argument. As shown, 1,5 – 2,2 place emphasis wholly

⁸¹ KIM, “Paul’s Entry”, 523-524.

on the visible impact of the gospel on the Thessalonians' lives, and much less emphasis on Paul's preaching than is often claimed. From there Paul proceeds to explain that the reason for the success of his visit was not so much his character but more the nature of the message as "the gospel of God" (2,3-4). He then recalls that his cruciform example (2,5-9) and his work among the Thessalonians were all directed toward their "walking worthily" and consequently entering into God's kingdom and glory (2,10-12). Next, he renews his thanks to God by recalling the way in which the Thessalonians' acceptance of the gospel had manifested itself in their endurance through suffering (2,13-16). Finally, after recalling his anxiety over their separation, Paul recalls how he had sent Timothy to strengthen their faith amid their affliction, and how he had been relieved when Timothy reported that their faith and love remained strong (2,17 – 3,10). He concludes by offering up a prayer that God would continue to increase their love toward one another (3,11-13).

It should be reiterated that our conclusion is that an apologetic reading at many points in the text does not stand up to scrutiny, *not* that the "parenetic" interpretation is the correct interpretation of the passage. Having made that qualification, it is worth observing that at those precise points where Paul indicates his motives through the *explicatures* of syntax, his *express* intention is in fact parenetic ("so that you might walk worthily of the one calling you into his kingdom and glory," 2,12; "in order to strengthen [...] encourage [...] so that you are not shaken," 3,2-3). Conversely, apologetic purposes are nowhere evident on the textual *surface*. Any apologetic motives, then, would have to be discerned at the *pragmatic* level of the discourse, where we have asked, for instance, *why* Paul defines himself using antitheses (2,5-9) or *why* he reaffirms his concern for his audience (2,17 – 3,10). Such questions cannot be definitively answered at the grammatical level, but, as we have suggested in our analysis, multiple answers are possible to each of them.

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SUMMARY

The history of modern interpretation has vacillated between an "apologetic" and a "parenetic" reading of 1 Thess 2,1-12. The present article begins with a critical review of recent scholarship on this passage and determines that the

crystallization of a two-view debate has had the infelicitous effect of (1) projecting greater divergence of opinion than is in fact present in the scholarly discussion, while (2) creating “summary” readings of the passage that fail to reflect the critical work of close exegesis. In its main part, the article then offers a fresh and detailed exegesis of 1 Thess 2,1-12 within the context of chapters 1–3 and comes to determinations at many points that undermine key supports used in defense of “apologetic” readings.

EPISTOLARY RHETORIC IN PAUL'S LETTERS: THE LETTER TO PHILEMON AS A TEST CASE

“In sum, the rhetorical and epistolary genres may have been betrothed, but they were never wed”¹. Ever since Jeffrey Reed applied this conjugal metaphor to epistolography and ancient rhetoric, the ravine between the two genres has widened. While some scholars consider Paul's letters as speeches within a simple epistolary framework², those who opt for epistolography have deplored rhetorical criticism³. Faced with the alternative between the two genres, some have considered Paul “a trained letter-writer instead of a rhetorician”⁴.

In an attempt to overcome this dichotomy, which we think artificial, we ought to examine at length the rhetorical function of the letter to Philemon. This will focus upon three trajectories which are key to resolving the question: the epistolary topology of absence/presence, the function of the epistolary aorist, and the letter's more expressive figures of speech. We will end with the letter's type and its persuasive purpose.

Before beginning our analysis, we need to mention a necessary premise. Given that the letter to Philemon is crossed by *insinuatō* or broad allusions to the historical context of the situation in which Paul, Philemon and Onesimus found themselves, it is better not to give too much credence to arguments from silence: the weakest form for interpreting such brief texts as the letter in question⁵. Meanwhile, let us recall to mind the rhetorical-epistolary structure of the letter.

¹ J.T. REED, “The Epistle”, *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. – A.D. 400* (ed. S.E. PORTER) (Leiden 1997) 192.

² B. WITHERINGTON III, *New Testament Rhetoric. An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR 2009) 3.

³ C.J. CLASSEN, “Kann die rhetorische Theorie helfen, das Neue Testament, vor allem die Briefe des Paulus, besser zu verstehen?”, *ZNW* 100 (2009) 145-172; S.E. PORTER, “A Functional Letter Perspective toward a Grammar of Epistolary Form”, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (eds. S.E. PORTER – S.A. ADAM) (Pauline Studies 6; Leiden 2010) 10: “In many ways, these efforts too seem to have run their productive course, so that much recent ancient rhetorical criticism of the New Testament has become stagnant and repetitious, and has failed to produce the interpretive results once promised”.

⁴ P.M. ROBERTSON, *Paul's Letters and Contemporary Greco-Roman Literature. Theorizing a New Taxonomy* (NovTSup 167; Leiden – Boston, MA 2016) 49.

⁵ See for example J.A. DOOLE, “Was Timothy in Prison with Paul?”, *NTS* 65 (2019) 59-77, according to whom Timothy was not with Paul during his imprisonment, but without ever distinguishing the various kinds of imprisonment that existed in the first century: free custody, detention, or imprisonment in view of execution.

I. THE RHETORICAL-EPISTOLARY ARRANGEMENT OF PHILEMON

In our opinion, the letter contains all of the items proper to epistolography and ancient rhetoric:

- (a) Prescript (vv. 1-3)
- (b) Thanksgiving/exordium (vv. 4-9)
- (c) Thesis (v. 10) and epistolary body/proofs (vv. 11-18)
- (d) *Peroratio* (vv. 19-20)
- (e) Postscript with epistolary recommendations (vv. 21-25) ⁶

This outline is upheld by the general thesis or *propositio* (v. 10), given that it corresponds to the main criteria set forth in the treatises of ancient rhetoric and taken up by Jean-Noël Aletti ⁷. The thesis is short, clear, complete, and is able to engender what follows ⁸. Prepared by the thanksgiving/exordium (vv. 4-9) and above all by the figure of parrhesia (v. 9), to which we will return, the thesis of Phlm 10 is marked by the deictic use of the verb παρακαλῶ and the preposition περί with a genitive of argument. Those accustomed to Paul's argumentative systems know well that the same verb introduces various turning points in his letters ⁹. The thesis in Phlm 10 is well prepared for by the vocabulary of *paraclesis* in vv. 7-8. It should come as no surprise that the thanksgiving in Phlm 3-9 is so extensive. Paul feels the need to prepare well the motive for which he turns to Philemon: to appeal on behalf of his slave. Because of the letter's brevity, the thesis in Phlm 10 assumes Janus' twofold face, looking back at the consolation and parrhesia while gazing towards the compassion which Paul hopes to arouse for Philemon's decision.

For the purposes of this analysis, we cannot help but point out the predominant and neuralgic use of the present tense that runs throughout the text. The letter is composed of twenty-one verbs in the present tense, compared to twelve aorist, three perfect, three future, and one imperfect. Therefore, the dominant temporal location of the letter is not the past, nor the future, but the present. In addition, the position of the verbs in the present, or with that value, is pivotal. The verb εὐχαριστῶ (v. 4) introduces the thanksgiving/exordium (vv. 4-9), παρακαλῶ presents the general thesis

⁶ On the arrangement of the letter to Philemon, see A. PITTA, "Come si persuade un uomo? Rilevanza retorico-letteraria del biglietto a Filemone", *Il paradosso della croce. Saggi di teologia paolina* (Casale Monferrato 1998) 279-301.

⁷ J.-N. ALETTI, "The Rhetorical Approach: A Better Method for Interpreting the Letters of Paul? Rom 1,18 – 3,20 a Test Case", *Bib* 100 (2019) 105-116.

⁸ On the pivotal importance of a thesis for Paul's letters, see A. PITTA, "A peg to hang 1 Thessalonians on? Nature and Function of 1 Thess 1,9-10", *Bib* 101 (2020) 87-106.

⁹ 1 Cor 1,10; 2 Cor 10,1; Rom 12,1; Phil 4,2; Eph 4,1.

(v. 10) and the perfect *πεποιθώς* (v. 21), whose value is the present, drives the passage towards the postscript (vv. 21-25). Two verbs remain: *ἀνέπεμψα* (v. 12) initiates the body of the letter (vv. 10-20) while *ἔγραψα* begins both the *peroratio* (v. 19) and the postscript (v. 21), to which we will return.

To dispel any hesitation about the *peroratio* in Phlm 19-20, we underline the use of a hyperbaton in v. 7 and v. 20: the sequence *τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπνυται* (v. 7) corresponds, inversely, to *ἀνάπνυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα* (v. 20). On hyperbaton in the treatises on ancient rhetoric, Hermogenes of Tarsus (second–third century CE) aptly explains:

Modern writers think that hyperbaton is an interweaving of expression and a period that has been ornamented, but they do not understand what a hyperbaton is. Hyperbaton not only is not an ornamental figure but it is even a necessary thing. It occurs whenever a speaker puts in the middle (of a sentence) the reason for what is being said, something the hearer is going to want ¹⁰.

In the letter to Philemon, the stress is on the imperative *ἀνάπνυσον* and on the personal pronoun *μου* (v. 20), since both refer to the hearts of the “saints” and of Paul. The two statements are also arranged in the form of a *reversio* or syntactic inversion and convey a synecdoche between the whole (“the saints”) and the part (the pronoun *μου*). As is expected of a rhetorical *peroratio*, vv. 19-20 return, with pathos, upon what has been previously introduced and demonstrated. The correspondence between the name *Ὀνήσιμον* (v. 10) and the very rare optative *ὀναίμην* is in no way unintentional for the *peroratio* (v. 20). Because every *nomen* is *omen*, and Onesimus means “benefit”, what Paul is about to request from Philemon is also a “benefit”. The benefit at hand is that Philemon would refresh Paul’s heart in Christ just as he has done for the saints (v. 7). But what kind of benefit is this?

III. PRESENCE IN ABSENCE BETWEEN PAUL AND PHILEMON

The letter serves countless purposes, and Cicero signals an epistolary topology of prime importance, namely absence/presence: “That there are many different categories of letters you are aware. But the most

¹⁰ HERMOGENES OF TARSUS, *On the method of forceful speaking* 429-430 (ed. G.A. KENNEDY) (SBL 15; Atlanta, GA 2005) 227-229. See also PSEUDO-CICERO, *Rhet. Her.* 4.32.43: “Hyperbaton upsets the word order by means either of anastrophe or transposition [...] A transposition of this kind, that does not render the thought obscure, will be very useful for periods, which I have discussed above; in these periods we ought to arrange the words in such a way as to approximate a poetic rhythm, so that the periods can achieve perfect fullness and the highest finish” (trans. H. CAPLAN) (LCL; London 1964) 339.

authentic, the purpose in fact for which letter-writing was invented, is to inform the absent of what it is desirable for them to know, whether in our interest or their own" (*Fam.* 2.4) ¹¹. We owe to Heikki Koskeniemi ¹² and Robert W. Funk ¹³ the rediscovery of *apousia/parousia* for ancient and Pauline epistolography. Thereafter, Terence Y. Mullins proposed a change in terminology, opting for "visit talk" indicative of content rather than form ¹⁴. In turn, Reimund Bieringer drew attention to the verbs of absence/presence in 2 Corinthians to argue that they do not have the function of portraying Paul in his absence, but of anticipating his arrival among his communities ¹⁵.

First of all, we consider that the implicit and not merely explicit use of absence/presence is a relatively unexplored area of Paul's letters. Moreover, perhaps it is better to maintain the wording proposed by Funk ¹⁶ or to simplify it with "presence in absence", which renders the idea well, barring confusion, for example, with the future Parousia (coming) of Jesus Christ, or with travel plans. Several commentators have, in fact, confused the promise of a visit in Phlm 22 with epistolary presence in absence ¹⁷. Although it is likely that Paul would mention the future visit to Philemon's house to make his request more pressing, the two reasons should, however, be distinguished. The clearest occasion of Paul's presence in absence among his communities occurs in 1 Cor 5,3, where in facing a case of incest he declares himself "absent (ἀπών) in the body, but present (παρών) in the spirit" ¹⁸.

¹¹ CICERO, *Letters to Friends*, vol. 1 (trans. D.R. SHACKLETON BAILY) (LCL 205; Cambridge, MA 2001) 235-236. On the absence/presence in Cicero's letters and in ancient epistolography, see J.-P. DE GIORGIO, "Absence et présence dans le lettres d'exil de Cicéron", *Interférences. Ars Scribendi* 8 (2015) 1-17.

¹² H. KOSKENIEMI, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.* (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B.102; Helsinki 1956).

¹³ R.W. FUNK, "The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance", *Christian History and Interpretation*. Studies Presented to John Knox (eds. W.R. FARMER – C.F.D. MOULE – R.R. NIEBUHR) (Cambridge 1967) 249-268.

¹⁴ T.Y. MULLINS, "Visit Talk in New Testament Letters", *CBQ* 35 (1973) 350-358.

¹⁵ R. BIERINGER, "Présence dans l'absence du Corps. Constructions de la présence et de l'absence de Paul en 2 Corinthiens dans la perspective des épîtres pauliniennes et du monde grec", *Paul's Graeco-Roman Context* (ed. C. BREYTENBACH) (BETL 277; Leuven 2015) 357-366.

¹⁶ L.A. JOHNSON, "Paul's Epistolary Presence in Corinth: A New Look at Robert W. Funk's Apostolic Parousia", *CBQ* 68 (2006) 481-501.

¹⁷ See, for example, J.A.D. WEIMA, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer*. An Introduction to Epistolary Analysis (Grand Rapids, MI 2016) 231, who labels Phlm 22 as "Apostolic Parousia".

¹⁸ On the epistolary absence/presence in Paul's letters, see 1 Cor 5,3; 16,17; 2 Cor 7,6-7; 10,1-2.10-11; 13,2; Gal 4,18.20; Phil 1,26-27; 2,12; Col 2,5.

In the letter to Philemon, Paul lingers twice on absence/presence, indirectly and by way of proxy. In the body of the letter (vv. 10-18), the first proof that Paul sets forth reminds Philemon that he desired to keep Onesimus near to serve “in his place” while in chains for the gospel (v. 13). Within the Pauline corpus, this is one of the rare cases where the saying ὑπὲρ σοῦ does not mean “for you” or “to your advantage”, which would not make sense in this context, but “in your place”¹⁹. The role he alludes to is that of συνεργός, with which Paul introduces himself and closes the letter. At first, Paul recognizes only Philemon as his “collaborator” (v. 1). At the close, his collaborators — Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke — all greet Philemon (v. 24). Similarly, a relationship between the proxy of presence in absence and the distance of the addressee stands out in 1 Corinthians, where Paul rejoices at the presence of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor 16,17) because they made up for the missing or absent Corinthians²⁰. Therefore, Paul wanted to keep Onesimus with him so that he might replace Philemon as a collaborator while Paul is in chains for the Gospel. However, he knows well that to detain a slave without the permission of his master is not only unethical but illegal. Already in his classic *Light from the Ancient East*, Adolf Deissmann quotes an illuminating parallel in the letter of a certain Mystarion to Stotoëtis (50 CE): “Mystarion to his own Stotoëtis many greetings. I send (ἔπεμψα) to you my Blastus for forked sticks for my olive gardens. See then that you do not detain (κατάσχεις) him. For you know that I need him every moment. Farewell!” (BGU I 37)²¹. In the Mystarion letter, as in Phlm 12-13, the epistolary aorist is used both with the verb πέμπω as with the verb κατέχω, meaning “to detain”.

For this reason Paul’s request for permission, made to Philemon (v. 14), clearly contrasts with the widespread interpretation of Onesimus as a fugitive slave²². How can Paul hold a fugitive slave while being under house arrest, seeking to detain him as his own so that he may serve Paul as a proxy for his owner?

¹⁹ See M. ZERWICK – M. GROSVENOR, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Roma 1981) 653.

²⁰ On coworkers of Paul’s mission, see E.E. ELLIS, “Paul and his Coworkers”, *NTS* 65 (1974) 191-207; W.-H. OLLROG, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter*. Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission (WMANT 50; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1979); L. LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *Paul the Missionary* (Leuven, 2003).

²¹ A. DEISSMANN, *Light From the Ancient East*. The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World (London 1911²) 157. See also P. ARZT-GRABNER, *Philemon* (PKNT 1; Göttingen 2003) 216.

²² Rightly, C.S. WANSINK, *Chained in Christ*. The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul’s Imprisonments (JSNT SS 130; Sheffield 1996) 179-188.

The motif of presence in absence returns near the end of the probatory section (vv. 11-18), with an incisive appeal: "So if you are in communion with me, receive him as you would myself" (v. 17). This hypothetical, more likely objective or simple than real, contains the present tense *ἔχεις* in the protasis and the imperative *προσλαβοῦ* in the apodosis. The presence in absence motif stands out with great appeal, for this time Onesimus does not represent Philemon with Paul but is sent to represent Paul with Philemon. Since Onesimus is Paul's heart (*σπλάγχνα*), the master is asked to welcome the slave as if he were Paul's alter ego. Most commentators emphasise the reception of Onesimus as "beloved in Christ"²³, forgetting that Onesimus is sent in Paul's place, to fill his absence with Philemon (v. 17).

Therefore, through recourse to presence in absence, the letter that Paul is about to send not only anticipates his own visit, but assumes a decisive performative function in being read before Philemon and his domestic church (v. 2)²⁴. One should apply to each of Paul's letters, including Philemon, what he recommends to the Thessalonians: "I adjure you, through the Lord, that the letter be read to all the brethren" (1 Thess 5,26).

IV. RETHINKING THE EPISTOLARY AORIST

The relationship between the topology of presence in absence and the epistolary aorist has scarcely been developed among scholars²⁵. So much so that the first is seen as a simple form that anticipates the future presence, while the second is reported as a mere grammatical detail²⁶. Thanks to Kenneth McKay, the "aspectual" dimension of the aorist has been reconsidered²⁷. Let us therefore see how epistolary aorists interact with the topology of absence/presence in the letter to Philemon.

²³ So among others, PORTER, "A Functional Letter Perspective", 10.

²⁴ B. OESTREICH, *Performanzkritik der Paulusbriefe* (WUNT I/296; Tübingen 2012).

²⁵ On the epistolary aorist in the letters of Paul and in the rest of the NT, see B.M. FANNING, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford 1990) 282; D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI 1996) 562-563; A.T. ROBERTSON, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Wenham, MA 2006) 845-846.

²⁶ So, among others, S. REESE, *Paul's Large Letters. Paul's Autographic Subscriptions in the Light of Ancient Epistolary Conventions* (LNTS 561; London – New York 2017) who treats the motif of absence/presence and the epistolary aorist separately.

²⁷ K. MCKAY, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek. An Aspectual Approach* (New York 1994) 48-49.

1. *Onesimus, collaborator and letter-carrier (Phlm 12)*

The first epistolary aorist is found in the wake of the topology of presence in absence (v. 13): ἀνέπεμψα (v. 12). In Paul's letters the verb ἀναπέμψω is found only here and in the rest of the NT shows up in Luke 23,7.11.15 and Acts 25,21. The compound verb can assume either a literal meaning of "to send back", as in Luke 23,7.11.15, or simply mean "to send", as in Acts 25,21. In the case of Phlm 12, since ἀνέπεμψα refers to the return of Onesimus (v. 15) to Philemon, the first meaning is preferable.

In any case, the compound verb takes on the same meaning as ἐπεμψα, used five out of six times as an epistolary aorist in Paul's letters. Among these, Paul goes about sending his collaborators: Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor 4,17), Epaphroditus to Philippi (Phil 2,28), and Tychicus to Colossae (Col 4,8) and to Ephesus (Eph 6,22). We must also include the brethren he is about to send (ἐπεμψα) to Corinth on occasion of the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor 9,3), in regard to whom Paul has already used the rare verb συνεπέμψαμεν (we are sending with) in 2 Cor 8,18.22. On all the occasions listed, the epistolary aorist assumes the value of the present tense since the sender imagines that he is among the recipients who are about to hear the contents of the letter. Not only that, but the clarification points out that the delegates themselves are letter-carriers and therefore worthy of the utmost trust in making sure that the letter's effect is reached.

Perhaps it is worth pointing out that the letter-carrier played a decisive role in the Roman Empire, when only the upper classes had access to the so-called *cursus publicus*, namely an official courier. The rest of the population used trustworthy people to deliver their letters²⁸. Such was the importance of the courier that, as Cicero writes to Atticus: "There are very few who can carry a letter of weight without lightening it by a perusal" (*Att.* 1.13)²⁹. Accordingly, Bianca-Jeanette Schröder notes:

Without the courier, the space between sender and recipient could not be bridged. As a mobile bridge between author and addressees, however, the courier available at any given moment could never be completely neutral or

²⁸ On the letter-carriers in Greek and Roman world, see A. KOLB, "Transport and Communication in the Roman State. The *cursus publicus*", *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (eds. C. ADAMS – R. LAURENCE) (London – New York 2001) 95-104; P. CECCARELLI, *Ancient Greek Letter Writing. A Cultural History (600 BC-150 BC)* (Oxford 2013); S. CORBINELLI, *Amicorum colloquia absentium. La scrittura epistolare a Roma tra comunicazione quotidiana e genere letterario* (Napoli 2008); P. HEAD, "Named Letter-Carriers among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri", *JSNT* 31 (2009) 279-299; A. SARRI, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World. 5000 BC – AD 300* (Berlin 2018) 12-14.

²⁹ *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* (trans. E.O. WINSTEDT) (LCL; London – New York 1919) 33.

without qualities of his own. The author therefore had to weigh both the advantages and the risks of using him. For the sender, the courier exerted a certain influence on the potential content of the letter to be delivered. And for the recipient he functioned as a living paratext of the message he transported, framing its substance even without speaking a word. The mere presence (and identity) of the courier provided an (implicit) commentary on the letter he delivered ³⁰.

If Paul is about to send Onesimus to Philemon and considers him as his heart, it is because he has fathered him in Christ (v. 10) ³¹ and now, with total trust, sends him as a courier, upon whom the success or failure of the letter depends. Therefore, the first epistolary aorist serves to underline, in the context of the presence in absence, Paul's presence with Philemon and his domestic church. With all due respect to those who continue to have reservations about the epistolary aorist, the anaphoric *νοὐνι δέ* that precedes the aorist together with the exegetic *τοῦτ' ἔστιν* (v. 12) not only suggest the present tense of the aorist *ἀνέπεμψα* but require it.

2. Writing with one's own hand (Phlm 19)

The letter to Philemon is the only one in the Pauline epistolary that has the repetition of the verb *ἔγραψα* in such proximity (vv. 19, 21). The aorist is used both times in the conjugations of the verb *λέγω* in the subjunctive (v. 19) and the indicative (v. 21). This would argue, contrary to an artificial separation between written letter and oral rhetoric, that at least in Paul's case the act of writing coincides with that of reading. Different still is the function of the aorist in v. 19 and v. 22.

In the first case, the verb *ἔγραψα* introduces the peroration with the promissory formula *ἐγὼ Παῦλος* (vv. 19-20). In Gal 5,2 the formula *Ἰδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω* plays the same role: it introduces the peroration of Gal 5,2-12 before the hortatory section in Gal 5,13 – 6,10. Objectively, the aorist *ἔγραψα* is used both for the past, as in 1 Cor 5,9.11; 2 Cor 2,3-4 and 2 Cor 7,12, and for the present, as in 1 Cor 9,15 and Gal 6,11. More controversial is the case of Rom 15,15 where the verb *ἔγραψα* in fact does not refer to a previous letter but to the present one in which for the first time Paul is addressing believers in Rome. We do not know if the use of *ἔγραψα* with an epistolary function is due to the influence of Latin

³⁰ B.-J. SCHRÖDER, "Couriers and Conventions in Cicero's Epistolary Network", *Letters and Communities. Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography* (eds. P. CECCARELLI – D. LUTZ – F. THORSTEN – I. GILDENHARD) (Oxford 2018) 81.

³¹ See the use of the same metaphor especially in 1 Thess 2,7-8.11; 1 Cor 3,1-2; 4,10.15-17; 2 Cor 6,13; 12,14; Gal 4,19; Phil 2,22; 1 Tim 4,6; 2 Tim 2,1-2.

on ancient Greek. Most probably because of its frequent use in common epistolography, the role it plays in Phlm 19, 21 would have an earlier origin. One of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (dated 66 CE) closes with a request expressed with the verb ἔγραψα in the epistolary aorist, placed there by the secretary who writes the letter because the sender is illiterate (P. Oxy. 275) ³².

With respect to the *dispositio*, we mentioned the double hyperbaton in v. 7 and v. 20. We now focus on the syllogism underlying the letter. Since Philemon (a) refreshes the hearts (b) of the saints (v. 7), and Onesimus (b') is Paul's heart (c) (v. 12), Philemon (a') is asked to refresh Paul's heart (c') (v. 20). Once again, the epistolary aorist is combined with the topology of presence in absence as a proxy. The attraction of the aorist ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα towards the future ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω, once again, not only favours the connotation of the aorist in the present, but makes it necessary.

Worthy of attention is the reference to Paul's own hand (v. 19). It is debated whether Paul means that the entire letter is his autograph or just what is written from this point forward. Furthermore, since this mention is in the probatory section of the letter (vv. 11-18), perhaps it does not have the same function as in Gal 6,11. In that case, Paul recalls the large characters with which he is about to write the postscript of the letter in Gal 6,11-18. Much less is it about a simple final authentication, as in Phlm 21 and the final greetings in 1 Cor 16,21; Col 4,18; and 2 Thess 3,17. Rather, in Phlm 19 Paul appeals to autography to support the promissory value of the previous accreditation with respect to the possible debt contracted by Onesimus and, again, to emphasise his presence when the letter will be read in the assembly. The second meaning is one of the recurring reasons for the epistolary presence in absence. Thus the promissory reach of Phlm 19 takes on greater consistency precisely because of Paul's presence in absence and the epistolary aorist, in favour of Onesimus' mediation, to be welcomed as Paul's alter ego. This is how Seneca reminds Lucilius:

If the pictures of our absent friends are pleasing to us, though they only refresh the memory and lighten our longing by a solace that is unreal and unsubstantial, how much more pleasant is a letter, which brings us real traces, a real evidence, of an absent friend! For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter — recognition (*Letters* 40.1) ³³.

³² *Select Papyri* (eds. A.S. HUNT – C.C. EDGAR) (LCL 266; Cambridge – London 1988) I, 40-41.

³³ SENECA, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* (trans. R.M. GUMMERE) (LCL; London – New York 1925) 263-265.

3. *The sender's conviction (v. 21)*

The verb *πεποιθώς*, typical of the art of persuasion, introduces the postscript (Phlm 21-25) ³⁴. The same verb belongs to “expressions of confidence” in ancient epistolography ³⁵. Paul is confident in or convinced of Philemon's obedience who, indeed, will do more than he is being asked. The latter aorist *ἔγραψα* introduces the postscript, but specifically the *epitrope* in the second part of v. 21. Pseudo-Cicero illustrates the function of the *epitrope* or *permissio* (“concession”) as follows: “Surrender is used when we indicate in speaking that we yield and submit the whole matter to another's will, as follows [...] Although this figure is often to be used also in other circumstances, it is especially suited to provoking compassion” (*Rhet. Her.* 4.29.39) ³⁶.

The original Latin text speaks of *misericiordiam* or “compassion” which the *epitrope* is able to arouse in the listener. The *permissio* or concession in a deliberative or forensic context corresponds to what Paul seeks to arouse in Philemon in view of compassion. Paul is convinced that Philemon will not only obey him, in the name of the debt he owes him for the shared faith, but will do more than he requires by letter. Again, the performative and not only informative request of the letter imposes itself. We do not know if the “above and beyond” that Paul seeks is Onesimus' manumission from slavery. We should keep in mind that in the ancient world manumission from slavery did not correspond to our social emancipation. Rather, manumission determined the passage from the condition of a slave to that of a freedman (*ἀπελευθέρως*, in 1 Cor 7,22) ³⁷. What is certain is that Paul is appealing for compassion for Onesimus and moreover for himself: an old man who hopes to be pardoned and freed from house arrest, with the prayers of Philemon and his domestic church, so that he might become their guest as soon as possible (v. 22).

If Paul is asking Philemon to make Onesimus available to him as collaborator, the condition of a freedman would be better than that of a slave. Nevertheless, he leaves the door open because that right belongs to the master only. Otherwise, Paul runs the risk of being charged for undue and illegal appropriation. To curb the phenomenon of clandestine manumission, the *lex Fufia Caninia* was decreed under the Principate of Augustus

³⁴ See the insightful contribution of J.L. KINNEAVY, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith. An Inquiry* (Oxford 1987).

³⁵ S.N. OLSON, “Pauline Expressions of Confidence in His Addressees”, *CBQ* 47 (1985) 289.

³⁶ PSEUDO-CICERO, *Rhet. Her.* (trans. CAPLAN), 328-339.

³⁷ Appropriately, J.A. HARRILL, “Paul and Slavery”, *Paul in the Greco-Roman World. A Handbook* (ed. J.P. SAMPLEY) (Harrisburg, PA 2003) 575-607.

(2 BCE), establishing the number of slaves who could be freed by means of a will. In 4 CE the *lex Aelia Sentia* forbade the manumission of slaves under thirty years of age ³⁸. Therefore, because of widespread manumission of slaves during the Principate, it is possible that Paul is begging for the manumission of Onesimus, but leaves the choice to Philemon ³⁹. What counts is that the concession in the postscript induces Philemon to compassion and allows Onesimus to work with Paul, who is in chains for the Gospel.

V. MAIN FIGURES OF SPEECH

The orality of a letter passes through how things are achieved with words, to evoke the beautiful essay by John L. Austin ⁴⁰. Unfortunately, after two thousand years, the relationship between rhetorical figures and the contents of a written or spoken word has greatly diminished ⁴¹. Whenever they are used, the figures of speech and thought are always functional with respect to the contents they convey, especially for someone who, like Paul, confesses himself to be “untrained in speech” (2 Cor 11,6). For the purposes of orality and its contents, let us focus on four figures of speech that touch the marrow of the letter: replication, parrhesia, paronomasia and chiasmus ⁴².

When we imagine the proclamation of the letter to Philemon in assembly, the first figure that stands out is antanaclasis, which consists in the replication or repetition on two or more occasions of a word that takes on different meanings (and not only contrarily, as Quintilian thought) ⁴³. Noteworthy in the letter to Philemon is the replication produced by the noun *παράκλησιν* (v. 7) and the nuanced verb *παρακαλῶ*, repeated in two consecutive sentences with a varied meaning (vv. 9, 10). Indeed, the

³⁸ On the many forms of manumission for slaves in the Graeco-Roman environment, see J. ANDREAU – R. DESCAT, *The Slave in Greece and Rome* (Madison, WI – London 2011).

³⁹ On the differences of manumission for slaves in Greek and Roman times, see P. HUNT, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery* (Malden, MA 2018).

⁴⁰ J.L. AUSTIN, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA 1975).

⁴¹ Among those who tend to re-evaluate rhetorical figures as vehicles of content, see A. GIENIUSZ, “‘Debtors to the Spirit’ in Romans 8.12? Reasons for the Silence”, *NTS* 59 (2013) 61-72, regarding the anacoluthon in Rom 8,12.

⁴² P.J. ACHEMEIER, “*Omne verbum sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity”, *JBL* 109 (1990) 3-27, preferred to emphasise anaphora, parallelism, alliteration and *inclusio* to demonstrate the oral environment of Paul’s letters.

⁴³ QUINTILIAN, *Inst. Or.* 9.3.68. On antanaclasis as a dialogue between people, see RUTILIUS LUPUS, *De figuris sententiarum et eleccionis* 1.5.

argument moves from the “comfort” received by Paul from Philemon’s love towards the saints (v. 7) to a proper exhortation in the name of that same love (v. 9), which brings forth a supplication on behalf of Onesimus (v. 10).

Thus Pseudo-Cicero speaks of replication, which he renders with *tractio*: “Replication makes it possible for the same word to be frequently reintroduced, not only without offence to good taste, but even so as to render the style more elegant [...] To the same type of figure belongs that which occurs when the same word is used first in one function, and then in another” (*Rhet. Her.* 4.14.20-21) ⁴⁴.

As a typical figure of speech and/or play on words, the replication in Phlm 7-10 progressively raises the tenor of thanksgiving until it flows into the supplication with which Paul addresses Philemon to plead Onesimus’ cause (v. 10) ⁴⁵. This progression confirms — if it were still necessary — the importance of a thesis or a *propositio* to understand Paul’s letters well.

In the context of orality itself, the use of parrhesia is justified by the very context of orality (v. 8). Before making his request explicit, Paul specifies that he does not intend to resort to parrhesia to direct Philemon in what ought to be done. Rather, he prefers to appeal to Philemon in the name of love. Several studies of parrhesia in Paul’s letters remain focused on its forensic and political relevance ⁴⁶. Less investigated is the role of parrhesia within the dynamics of friendship, which is discussed by Philodemus of Gadara in his treatise *Περὶ παρρησίας* ⁴⁷, and by Plutarch in *Quomodo ab adulatore discernatur amicus*. Remaining completely ignored is parrhesia as a figure of speech in the Pauline epistles, which we seek to decipher for Phlm 10 ⁴⁸. Once again, Pseudo-Cicero points out two essential traits of parrhesia ⁴⁹: “Thus this figure called frankness of speech

⁴⁴ PSEUDO-CICERO, *Rhet. Her.* (trans. CAPLAN), 280-281.

⁴⁵ The multiplicity of replication with the same language of *paraclesis* is produced in the splendid exordium of 2 Cor 1,3-7.

⁴⁶ G. SCARPAT, *Parrhesia greca, parrhesia cristiana* (SB 130; Brescia 2001); J.P. SAMPLEY, “Paul’s Frank Speech with the Galatians and the Corinthians”, *Philodemus and the New Testament World* (eds. J.T. FIZGERALD – D. OBBINK – G.H. HOLLAND) (NovTSup 111; Leiden 2004) 295-321; D. KONSTAN, “The Two Faces of *parrhēsia*: Free Speech and Self-Expression in Ancient Greece”, *Antichthon* 46 (2012) 1-13.

⁴⁷ C.E. GLAD, *Paul and Philodemus*. Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy (NovTSup 81; Leiden 1995).

⁴⁸ On *παρρησία* as figure of speech, see R.D. ANDERSON JR., *Glossary of Greek Rhetoric Terms and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian* (CBET 24; Leuven 2000) 94. Nevertheless, Anderson wrongly translates the word with “frank criticism” and does not deepen the oral nature of *παρρησία*, without quoting Phlm 8.

⁴⁹ On parrhesia in treatises of ancient rhetoric, see also RUTILIUS LUPUS, *De figuris sententiarum et eleccionis* 2.18.

will, as I have shown, be handled in two ways: with pungency, which, if too severe, will be mitigated by praise; and with pretense, discussed above, which does not require mitigation, because it assumes the guise of frank speech and is of itself agreeable to the hearer's frame of mind" (*Rhet. Her.* 4.37.50) ⁵⁰.

The case of Phlm 10 is a typical example of parrhesia by insinuation, more than by pretense. In fact, the whole letter proceeds by allusions, except (perhaps surprisingly) the candid request for accommodation (v. 22)! Paul keeps hidden between the lines "what is opportune" (τὸ ἀνήκον, v. 8), "the good" (τὸ ἀγαθόν, v. 14), "if anything" (εἰ δέ τι, v. 18), and "the things" (ἃ, v. 21) to which he is alluding ⁵¹. The allusive connotation of the letter is due, in our opinion, to the epistolary situation and the rhetorical strategy implemented by Paul, because he finds himself detained ⁵². While the epistolary situation responds to the real situation of Paul's letters, rhetorical strategy is of an inclusive type because it addresses issues involving the recipients of two or more communities ⁵³. In the case of Philemon, the interlocutors mentioned in Phlm 2 and vv. 22b-23 are not mere spectators. Rather, they are invited to participate in the plea that Paul is making to Philemon and to pray that he be released from prison to return among them.

Between the parrhesia (v. 8) by insinuation and the *epitrope* or concession (v. 21), the letter is a jewel of rhetoric. As a widespread figure of speech in the Graeco-Roman world ⁵⁴, the parrhesia referred to in Phlm 10 is more than frankness, authority, and freedom, as it is erroneously translated in many current versions. Rather, parrhesia is the right to "say everything" within the mutual equality that unites those who are in Christ by sharing (see κοινωνόν, v. 17) in the same faith. As Michel Foucault pointed out, you cannot translate παρρησία with one word ⁵⁵:

⁵⁰ PSEUDO-CICERO, *Rhet. Her.* (trans. CAPLAN), 355.

⁵¹ On allusions understood as dilemma in Paul's Letter to Philemon, see J.M.G. BARCLAY, "Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership", *NTS* 37 (1991) 161-186.

⁵² Against the distinction between the epistolary situation and rhetorical situation, proposed by G.A. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Studies in Religion; Chapel Hill, NC – London 1984) 34-35, which does not apply to the letters of Paul.

⁵³ On the difference between epistolary situation and rhetorical strategy, see A. PITTA, "A Challenge: Epistolary Rhetoric in Romans", *Romans, the Gospel of God* (AnB 16; Roma 2020) 34-37.

⁵⁴ See I. SLUITER – R.M. ROSEN, *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity* (Mnemosyne S 254; Leiden 2004); A.W. SAXONHOUSE, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge 2006).

⁵⁵ M. FOUCAULT, *Discourse and Truth and Parrēsia* (eds. H.P. FRUCHAUD – D. LORENZINI) (Chicago, IL – London 2019).

parrhesia is parrhesia! And since parrhesia is “the right to say everything”, the accompanying pleonasm in Phlm 8 is expressive: “For this reason, with bold (πολλήν) parrhesia in Christ [...]”. Understood in this way, vv. 8-9 are not yet the body of the letter, as for the majority of commentators, but they are part of the thanksgiving/exordium (vv. 4-9) that prepares the ground for the general thesis (v. 10) and the body of the letter (vv. 11-20).

Among plays on words, we also find the beautiful paronomasia in v. 11, where Paul deliberately plays on the adjectives ἄχρηστον and εὐχρηστον to highlight the new condition of Onesimus as being ἐν Χριστῷ (vv. 8.20.23), which unites the interlocutors of the letter. The paronomasia is particularly refined if we consider that the adjective ἄχρηστος in Phlm 11 is found nowhere else in the whole NT and that εὐχρηστον reoccurs only in 2 Tim 2,21 and 4,11. The name of Christ resonates in eight of twenty-five verses ⁵⁶, for which the paronomasia of v. 11 becomes highly significant. While it remains uncertain if itacism was already in use in the first century, nevertheless, Onesimus passes from being civilly “un-useful” (ἄχρηστος) as a slave to being “useful” (εὐχρηστον) because he is ἐν Χριστῷ. There is no need to think that Onesimus was once useless because he was a fugitive or in conflict with his master. He was just like all other slaves in the ancient world, subject to the will of their masters ⁵⁷. Now in Christ, Onesimus is more than useful and is considered a beloved brother, already certainly so for Paul and increasingly so for Philemon (v. 16).

The last figure of speech, both decisive for orality and a key to understanding the letter, is the chiasmus in vv. 5 and 15. On the use and abuse of chiasm in Paul's letters, it should be pointed out that it was widespread in Greek-Latin literature and not only in Semitic literature ⁵⁸. Moreover, to be called as such, chiasmus or *commutatio* requires the lexical or syntactical correspondence of all terms involved and not only those chosen at will. In the opening thanksgiving, Paul says: (a) ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην (b) καὶ τὴν πίστιν, (b') ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν (a') καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους (Phlm 5). As is common for the chiasmus in Paul's letters, the centre is held by faith in the Lord Jesus (b-b'), on which the love for all saints depends (a-a'). The passage is perhaps deliberately

⁵⁶ Phlm 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 20, 23, 25.

⁵⁷ See the texts collected by P. GARNSEY, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge 1996).

⁵⁸ *Rhet. Her.* 4.28.39 calls chiasmus *commutatio* or “reciprocal change”. In turn, RUTILIUS LUPUS, *De figuris sententiarum* 1.6 labels chiasmus as *antimetabole*, adducing the following example: “If those who are wise would learn to command and those who command would learn to be wise”.

overlooked because of the long-standing debate on the genitive “faith of Christ” in Paul’s letters. The weaving of the chiasmus in Phlm 5 should make clear the objective meaning of the faith that Philemon has in the Lord Jesus.

The chiasm in Phlm 15 is even more relevant for the content of the letter: (a) *Τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη* (b) *πρὸς ὥραν*, (b’) *ἵνα αἰώνιον* (a’) *αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς*⁵⁹. An entire sandcastle has been built upon this affirmation, that Onesimus fled from Philemon: from John Chrysostom to the most recent commentators⁶⁰, including my own aforementioned study. First of all, it seems that the aorist *ἐχωρίσθη* is never used in Greek literature to signal the flight of a slave from his master⁶¹. Neither is God mentioned in the surrounding context to sustain the divine passive of the verb. The only references to *θεός* in the letter to Philemon occur in the *salutatio* (v. 3) and the thanksgiving formula (v. 4). Likewise, the hypothesis that Onesimus is the logical subject of the verb in its passive form is unconvincing⁶². A slave could not separate himself nor stray from his master on his own initiative, unless it meant escaping, which is never mentioned in the letter. Rather, in correspondence to the chiastic structure with *ἀπέχῃς* (present subjunctive active), one more naturally thinks of a passive, whose logical subject is Philemon himself. It is very likely that the master was deprived of his slave for a time, having sent him to Paul for support while in prison. If he had not given up his slave for a time, Paul would not have become a father to Onesimus by leading him to have faith in Christ (v. 10), and Philemon would not recover him as a brother in a new human condition (*ἐν σαρκί*) and in the Lord (v. 16).

VI. CONCLUSION

More than betrothed yet still unwed, epistolography and ancient rhetoric often seem to be twins born from the womb of orality, as text dictated and proclaimed. The main reason should be clear: rhetoric was subject to different genres, while ancient epistolography was not seen as a literary

⁵⁹ See L. GIULIANO, “‘Per un momento’ o ‘per sempre’? La funzione retorica del chiasmo in Fm 15”, *RivB* 58 (2010) 355-369.

⁶⁰ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. Phlm.*, PG 62, 711.

⁶¹ Against this, among others, J.A.D. WEIMA, “Paul’s Persuasive Prose: An Epistolary Analysis of the Letter to Philemon”, *Philemon in Perspective*. Interpreting a Pauline Letter (ed. D.F. TOLMIE) (Berlin 2010) 50, who considers the verb *χωρίζω* to be a euphemism, to uphold the hypothesis of the runaway slave.

⁶² Among the supporters of the reflexive scope of the verb *ἐχωρίσθη*, see H. FÖRSTER, “Die Bitte des Paulus für den Sklaven Onesimus. Semantische und syntaktische Überlegungen zum Philemonbrief”, *NovT* 60 (2018) 269-270.

genre, in the modern sense of the term, but as a style of sorts and a means of communication between people unable to meet due to distances of space and time. In our opinion, the modern divorce of the two genres derives from this misunderstanding.

To dismantle the prejudice that places rhetorical criticism as the defining goal of research ⁶³, let us close with the issue of epistolary genre most appropriate to the letter to Philemon. The majority of scholars hold it to be a letter of recommendation ⁶⁴, except that the substance and language for such a letter is lacking. Among the few types of letters that Paul mentions are those of recommendation (see 2 Cor 3,1: συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν), and likewise Paul does not hesitate to recommend Phoebe to the domestic communities of Rome (see συνίστημι in Rom 16,1) ⁶⁵.

On the other hand, letters of recommendation serve those who are being presented to other people, not those who are returning to the same house from whence they came (Phlm 12) ⁶⁶. Notwithstanding the parallels drawn with Pliny the Younger's *Letter* 9.21.3 to his friend Sabinianus in favour of a freedman (and not of a slave), there is no trace in the letter to Philemon of repentance on the part of Onesimus nor of any mistreatment of him by Philemon. On the contrary, if Philemon is praised because of his love for all the saints (v. 5), it makes no sense why he would have mistreated Onesimus.

Moreover, Paul's plea has all the characteristics of being carefully crafted to gain the practical benefit for which he most urgently writes to Philemon. He hopes to be freed as soon as possible from house arrest, to stay some time in Philemon's house (v. 22), and to restart the mission with the collaboration of Onesimus. Pseudo-Demetrius (second century BCE to third century CE) defines this type of letter as ἀξιωματικός, condensed however to a simple supplication ⁶⁷, while implying at first glance the

⁶³ Once more, S.E. PORTER, "Ancient Literature Culture and Popular Rhetorical Knowledge: Implications for Studying Pauline Rhetoric", *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric* (eds. S.E. PORTER – B.R. DYER) (Cambridge 2016) 96-115.

⁶⁴ So among others C.H. KIM, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (SBL DS 4; Missoula, MT 1972). In turn, C. KUMITZ, *Der Brief als Medium der ἀγάπη. Eine Untersuchung zur rhetorischen und epistolographischen Gestalt der Philemonbriefes* (EHS.T 787; Frankfurt a. M. 2004) 87, hypothesised for Philemon a mixed genre: family, friendship and recommendation.

⁶⁵ Moreover, see the use of συνίστημι in 2 Cor 4,2; 6,4; 7,11; 10,12.18; 12,11.

⁶⁶ PSEUDO-LIBANIUS (fourth-sixth century CE) labels the epistolary commending style as follows: "The commending style is that in which we commend someone to someone. It is also called the introductory style" (*Ancient Epistolary Theorists* [ed. A.J. MALHERBE] [SBL BS 19; Atlanta, GA 1988] 68-69).

⁶⁷ PSEUDO-DEMETRIO, *Epistolary Types* 27: "The supplicatory type consists of requests, supplications and so-called entreaties; sometimes it consists of a petition" (*Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 37).

value of what is most important. For this reason, Pseudo-Libanius identifies this type of letter well, unequivocally defining it as παρακλητική: “The requesting style is that in which we make a request of someone in consequence of something important”⁶⁸. If in the general thesis Paul uses the verb παρακαλῶ to identify himself with Onesimus, it means that for him the most important thing is that Onesimus has become a son to him while he was in chains (v. 10)⁶⁹. The outcome he most hopes for from his master is to have Onesimus entrusted to Paul as a collaborator.

When epistolary rhetoric is respectful of the orality that obtains in the original dictation and eventual proclamation of the letter, it may still have much to give to the understanding of the Pauline letters. We ignore the success of the letter, whether Philemon granted that Onesimus be entrusted to Paul as collaborator or not. A most fitting comment is found in the letter to the Colossians, regardless of its authorial or pseudo-epistolographical status. Paul, or one for him, is about to send Tichicus to Colossae and adds: “With him will also come Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother who is one of you. They will inform you about all things here” (Col 4,9). If it is not a case of someone with the same name, but Onesimus himself, the letter to Philemon did achieve its desired effect: the new condition of a slave who is not a fugitive, nor is simply recommended to his master, but is a beloved brother requested with intense supplication to be Paul’s collaborator.

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SUMMARY

Pauline studies have witnessed an ever-increasing gap between epistolography and rhetoric over the last forty years. Attempting to overcome this artificial division, the present contribution examines the level of orality present in the letter to Philemon. The high level of orality that runs through the letter is demonstrated in a topology of presence in absence, in the use of the epistolary aorist, and in prominent figures of speech. The most fitting rhetorical epistolary genre is that of supplication, to request that Onesimus become Paul’s close associate. In this case, letter and rhetoric, rather than being betrothed but never wed, seem to have been engendered as twins in the womb of orality, a text dictated when sent to be proclaimed upon arrival.

⁶⁸ PSEUDO-LIBANIUS, *Epistolary Style* 14 (*Ancient Epistolary Theorist*, 69).

⁶⁹ On the letter to Philemon as supplication, see A. PITTA, “Sistemi argomentativi e topologie ellenistiche nelle lettere paoline”, *L’ellenizzazione del cristianesimo dal I al II secolo. Atti del XIII Convegno di Studi Neotestamentari* (Ariccia, 10-12 Settembre 2009) (eds. G. BELLIA – D. GARRIBBA) (RSB 23; Bologna 2011) 65.

A CONJECTURAL EMENDATION IN PSALM 68,19*

Psalm 68 is considered one of the most difficult of all the psalms¹. Its incomprehensibility is due in large part to its high degree of textual corruption². Therefore, the best or even the only way forward in understanding its original meaning is by trying to reconstruct its original form according to sound text-critical principles.

A good place to start is verse 19 (Eng. 18), which is perhaps the most famous verse in the psalm, because it is quoted in a homily by Paul in the New Testament (Eph 4,8). The verse is cited below, divided into its three apparent cola³ and accompanied by a literal translation:

You went up to the heights, you captured captives;	עלית למרום שבית שבי
You took gifts in Man;	לקחת מתנות באדם
And also rebellious ones to dwell Yah God.	ואף טוררים לשכן יה אלהים:

I. PROBLEMS

The first two cola are not overly difficult. The first colon praises the addressee, apparently God (see vv. 18, 20), as having scored a victory: he went up to some high place and took human prisoners. The second

* I thank Israel Knohl, Chanan Ariel, Idan Dershowitz, and Itai Kagan for their helpful comments.

¹ See W.F. ALBRIGHT, "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems (Psalm LXVIII)", *HUCA* 23 (1951) 1-39, here 7; M.D. CASSUTO, "Psalm 68", *Tarbiz* 12 (1940) 1-27 (Hebrew), here 1; M. DAHOOD, *Psalms II: 51-100* (AB; New York 1974) 133; I. KNOHL, *Holy Name* (Or Yehuda 2012) 28 (Hebrew).

² See F.L. HOSSFELD – E. ZENGER, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (trans. L.M. MALONEY) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 2005) 160.

³ Scholars who divide the verse in this manner include: W.M.L. DE WETTE, *Commentar über die Psalmen* (Heidelberg⁵ 1856) 358; F. HITZIG, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig – Heidelberg 1863) 83; H. EWALD, *Commentary on the Psalms*. Vol. II (trans. E. JOHNSON) (London – Edinburgh 1881) 204; J. WELLHAUSEN, *The Book of Psalms*. Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text (trans. J.D. PRINCE) (SBOT 14; Leipzig 1895) 30; F. BAETHGEN, *Die Psalmen* (HKAT II/2; Göttingen³ 1904) 207; H. GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen* (HKAT II/2; Göttingen 1926) 282; CASSUTO, "Psalm 68", 16; J.P. FOKKELMAN, "The Structure of Psalm LXVIII", *In Quest of the Past*. Studies on Israelite Religion, Literature, and Prophetism (ed. A.S. VAN DER WOUDE) (Leiden 1990) 72-83, here 74; M.E. TATE, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Dallas 1990) 161; I. KNOHL, "Psalm 68: Structure, Composition and Geography", *JHS* 12 (2012) <https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs.2012.v12.a15>, here 7; IDEM, *Holy Name*, 29, 38.

colon presumably repeats the idea of the first one: the addressee took gifts that were members of the collective “Man”⁴, namely human captives, prisoners⁵.

But the last colon of the verse looks like nonsense. Albright wrote of its five words, “I have no idea what to do with them”⁶, and *BHS* dismisses its last three as corrupt. It seems to speak of rebellious ones, of dwelling, and of God, but it is unclear who is dwelling, where they are dwelling, what the connection between the dwelling and the rebellious ones or God is, and what the connection between the colon and the rest of the verse is (contrast with verse 17, where it is clear that God dwells on the Mountain that God desired).

In addition to all these problems, the collocation יה אלהים is anomalous, occurring nowhere else in the Bible. The fact that this occurrence is located within the Elohistic Psalter (Psalms 42–83) does not suffice to explain the anomaly, because יה is not collocated with any divine name anywhere else in the Psalms, where forty-three of its forty-nine occurrences are found⁷.

II. VERSIONS AND HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

The Septuagint here reads καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνοῦσαι. κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός, “indeed, when they were disobedient to encamp. The Lord God be blessed” (*NETS*). This is a variant reading, reflecting וְאֵף סוֹרְרִים לִשְׁכֵּן, יה אלהים ברוך, with the ברוך at the beginning of the next verse doubled. This variant has largely been ignored⁸, and rightly so: it contains most of the problems of the Masoretic reading, and, moreover, “the Lord God be blessed” bears no obvious relation to the rest of the verse.

⁴ See *HALOT*, s.v. בָּ, definition 2: “to be in a multitude, among”.

⁵ KNOHL (*Holy Name*, 38) notes that the taking (לִקְחָתִי) of given or gifted (נְתָנִים) humans, specifically by God as temple servants, is mentioned in Num 8,16; that the concept of humans being given for that purpose is expressed also in Josh 9,27; and that such people are called נְתָנִים (e.g., Ezra 8,20).

⁶ ALBRIGHT, “A Catalogue”, 26.

⁷ It is juxtaposed with אֲדֹנִי once (Ps 130,3), but clearly in a separate colon. It is followed by a second divine name three times in the Masoretic version of Isaiah: יה יהוה (12,2); יהוה ביה יהוה (26,4); and יה יהוה (38,11). But, even there, the textual evidence suggests that the doubling may be a secondary development. The Septuagint attests only one divine name in all three instances. 1QIsa^a attests one name possibly corrected to two, וְזִמְרַתִּי יהוה (supralinear ה), in 12,2 (XI, 8); two names, ביה יהוה, in 26,4 (XX, 16); and one name, יה, in 38,11 (XXXII, 3). 4QIsa^b attests ביה אֲדֹנִי in 26,4 (16ii). The parallels to Isa 12,2 have one or no divine name according to all witnesses. Exod 15,2: MT וְזִמְרַתִּי יהוה; Sam וְזִמְרַתִּי יהוה; LXX וְזִמְרַתִּי יהוה. Ps 118,14: MT וְזִמְרַתִּי יהוה; LXX וְזִמְרַתִּי יהוה.

⁸ It is not recognized, for example, in *BHS*.

Unsurprisingly, almost every imaginable interpretation of the colon in the Masoretic reading has found advocates:

- The rebellious ones dwell with Yah God ⁹.
- The rebellious ones do *not* dwell with Yah God ¹⁰.
- The rebellious ones dwell, O Yah God ¹¹.
- Yah God dwells with the rebellious ones ¹².
- Yah God entombs the rebellious ones ¹³.
- [You took from/for ...] the rebellious ones, so that Yah God can dwell ¹⁴.
- [You took from ...] the rebellious ones, so that you can dwell, O Yah God ¹⁵.
- [You took from ...] the rebellious ones, to be enthroned as Yah God” ¹⁶.
- [You took from ...] those who are rebellious against Yah God’s abiding ¹⁷.

Alternatively, some scholars have conjecturally emended the text in various ways, turning:

- לְשֹׁכֵן יָהּ, “to dwell Yah”, into לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ בָּהּ, “shall not dwell in it” ¹⁸;
- לְשֹׁכֵן into either שֶׁכְּנוּ, “did not dwell” ¹⁹, or לֹא לְשֹׁכֵן, “not to dwell” ²⁰;
- לְשֹׁכֵן into יִשְׁכְּנוּ לָךְ, “they must bow down to you”, as in Num 17,20 ²¹;

⁹ Jerome’s Gallican Psalter (according to the Clementine Vulgate) and *iuxta Hebraicum*; Abraham ibn Ezra’s second commentary and David Kimhi ad loc.; Coverdale, Matthew, and Taverner Bibles; DE WETTE, *Commentar*, 358, 370; EWALD, *Commentary*, 204, 209; BAETHGEN, *Die Psalmen*, 207; Z.P. CHAJES, *The Book of Psalms* (Jerusalem 1969/70 [1902]) 144 (Hebrew); KNOHL, *Holy Name*, 38-39; GKC §117bb, §114k.

¹⁰ Peshitta, apparently taking the word וַאֲף as giving the colon the tone of a rhetorical question. There is no need for the suggestion in *BHS* that the Peshitta reflects the variant וַאֲף סוֹרְרִים לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים.

¹¹ YLT; NET; N. DECLAISSE-WALFORD – R.A. JACOBSON – B.L. TANNER, *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI 2014) 545.

¹² *Targum of Psalms*; *Exodus Rabbah* 33:2; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6:5; *Midrash Tehillim* ad loc.; Rashi; pseudo-Rashbam; Metzudat David ad loc.; Bishop’s Bible; Great Bible; KJV; Webster’s Bible; ASV.

¹³ DAHOOD, *Psalms II*, 131, 142.

¹⁴ Geneva Bible; Darby Bible; ESV; RSV; NIV.

¹⁵ A. HAKHAM, *The Book of Psalms*. Books 1–2 (Da’at Mikra; Jerusalem 1979) 394 (Hebrew); HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *A Commentary*, 159, 165-166, 498.

¹⁶ A. WEISER, *The Psalms*. A Commentary (trans. H. HARTWELL) (OTL; Philadelphia, PA 1998) 478, 488. The rendering of שָׁכַן as “be enthroned” and the introduction of prepositional “as” are not explained.

¹⁷ NRSV; NJPS; TATE, *Psalms*, 161, 181.

¹⁸ H. GRAETZ, *Kritischer Commentar zu den Psalmen*. Zweiter Band (Breslau 1883) 212, 217.

¹⁹ WELLHAUSEN, *Book of Psalms*, 30, 88; B. DUHM, *Die Psalmen* (KHC 14; Tübingen 1922) 259. Cf. Peshitta above.

²⁰ B. DUHM, *Die Psalmen* (KHC 14; Freiburg 1899) 177.

²¹ GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen*, 290. See also *BHK*: יִשְׁכְּנוּ לָךְ.

- צִיָּה into יָה , “[in the] desert”²²;
- or, more drastically, removing וְאֵף סוֹרְרִים and יָה אֱלֹהִים entirely as glosses²³.

III. NEW PROPOSAL

The account of Gideon’s pursuit of the Midianites says that he went up $\text{בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׁכוּנֵי בָּאֵהִלִּים}$, “by the Road of the Tent Dwellers” (Judg 8,11). This is recognized as an instance of a preposition occurring within a construct chain; the standard form of the term for the group that gave its name to the road would be $\text{שְׁכוּנֵי הָאֵהִלִּים}$ ²⁴.

The geographical setting of that pericope is clearly Transjordan, and the pursuit seems to lead Gideon to הַבָּשָׁן , Bashan, in particular. Immediately after its mention, the road is said to be east of נֹבַח and יִגְבֵּהָה . The first of these two locales, נֹבַח , is the same as קִנָּת (Num 32,42), which is in the region of חוֹת יַאֲרִי or the “Sixty Towns” (Num 32,41; 1 Chr 2,23) in הַבָּשָׁן (Deut 3,14; Josh 13,30) and is identified with Qanawat in the Hauran of southwestern Syria²⁵. The latter locale, יִגְבֵּהָה , is in Gadite territory further south (Num 32,35). It is identified with al-Jubeiha, eleven kilometers northwest of old Amman²⁶ and some 110 kilometers southwest of Qanawat as the crow flies. The apparently great distance between נֹבַח and יִגְבֵּהָה has troubled scholars, leading some to doubt that the former is the נֹבַח of Num 32,42²⁷, and at least one to remove it from the text entirely through emendation²⁸. But it is rather יִגְבֵּהָה whose authenticity here should be suspected, as it is absent in the Septuagint: its equivalent in

²² F. PERLES, *Analekten zur Textkritik des alten Testaments*. Neue Folge (Leipzig 1922) 33.

²³ C.A. BRIGGS – E.G. BRIGGS, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Vol. II (ICC; New York 1907) 95, 101-102.

²⁴ David Kimhi ad loc.; R.G. BOLING, *Judges* (AB; New York 1975) 156; Y. AMIT, *Judges*. Introduction and Commentary (Mikra LeYisra’el; Tel Aviv 1999) 150 (Hebrew). For the general phenomenon, with examples, see GKC §130a with n. 2; Joüon §129m. For the conjectural emendation of הַשְּׁכוּנֵי to שְׁכוּנֵי , which neither affects nor is affected by the present discussion, see BHK; BHS; N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *Judges* (BHQ 7; Stuttgart 2011) 26, 72.

²⁵ B. ODED, “Qenat”, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 7:203-205 (Hebrew); J.C. SLAYTON, “Nobah (Place)”, *ABD* 4:1133; G.L. MATTINGLY – P.N. FRANKLIN, “Kenath (Place)”, *ABD* 4:16-17; I. DERSHOWITZ, “Kenath”, *EBR* 15:109-110.

²⁶ M. BROSHI, “Yogbehah”, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 3:461-462 (Hebrew); HALOT, s.v. יִגְבֵּהָה .

²⁷ Z. KALLAI, “Conquest and Settlement of Trans-Jordan: A Historiographical Study”, *ZDPV* 99 (1983) 110-118, here 115; SLAYTON, “Nobah”; J.M. SASSON, *Judges 1-12* (AB 6D; New Haven, CT 2014) 361.

²⁸ B. ODED, “Three Topographical Minutiae”, *Beit Mikra* 14 (1969) 117-120 (Hebrew), here 120.

Codex Alexandrinus and affiliated manuscripts, which most faithfully represent the original Old Greek translation of Judges ²⁹, is ζεβεε/ζεβει, reflecting זבֵּה, one of the two Midianite kings whom Gideon is pursuing; and its equivalent in Codex Vaticanus is ιεγεβαλ, reflecting, apparently, יִגְבֵּל, which is unknown ³⁰. The location of קִרְקֹר [ה] in verse 10 is not known beyond wild guesses ³¹, nor is that of מַעֲלֵה הַחֶרֶס in verse 13, if it is a geographical label ³².

Transjordan, and particularly Bashan, is also the setting of the part of Psalm 68 that surrounds our verse: בָּשָׁן is mentioned in verse 23, and הַר בָּשָׁן, “the Mountain(s) of Bashan”, is/are mentioned twice in verse 16. Moreover, צֶלְמוֹן in verse 15 has been independently identified, based on mentions in Ptolemy’s *Geography* (5.15.8; 5.15.26) of a Syrian mountain near Batanaea (Bashan) called Ἀλσάλαμος or Ἀσάλμανος in some manuscripts of the work ³³, with Jabal al-Druze, the very region of Qanawat ³⁴.

For an original לִשְׁכְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים in Ps 68,19 to have changed in transmission to the attested לִשְׁכֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, only two small and common scribal errors would need to have happened. First, metathesis ³⁵ of ה and ל, creating the string אֱלֹהִים. This is especially plausible here, due to the shadow cast by verse 17 and because אֱלֹהִים is one of the most salient words in the Bible. Indeed, a virtually identical change occurred in Ps 83,7, where the Masoretic Text has אֶת־לִי, “tents of”, supported by the Septuagint (σκηνώματα), but the proto-Masoretic Judean Desert scroll MasPs^a (II, 19) reads אֱלֹהֵי, “gods of” ³⁶. Second, word misdivision, which would follow

²⁹ P.E. SATTERTHWAITHE, “Judges”, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title (eds. A. PIETERSMA – B.G. WRIGHT) (Oxford 2007) 195-238, here 195.

³⁰ A.E. BROOKE – N. MCLEAN, *The Old Testament in Greek*. Volume I. The Octateuch: Part IV. Joshua, Judges and Ruth (Cambridge 1917) 822. Note that the Septuagint’s equivalent of נִבְּחָה here is ναβεθ (Alexandrinus) or ναβαι (Vaticanus); both forms are very similar to its equivalents of נִבְּחָה in Num 32:42: Ναβῶθ (the place) and Ναβαύ (the person).

³¹ B. ODED, “Qarqor, Haqqarqor”, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 7:279 (Hebrew); HALOT, s.v. קִרְקֹר; H.O. THOMPSON, “Karkor (Place)”, *ABD* 4:6; M. PRUDKÝ, “Karkor”, *EBR* 15:49.

³² Editors, “Heres, Ascent of Heres”, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 3:304 (Hebrew); HALOT, s.v. III * הֶרֶס; G.A. HERION, “Heres, Ascent of (Place)”, *ABD* 3:143; E. GAB, “Heres, Ascent of”, *EBR* 11:845.

³³ K. MÜLLER, *Claudii Ptolemæi Geographia* (Paris 1883) 964 lines 11-12, 985 lines 10-11.

³⁴ J.G. WETZSTEIN, *Das batanäische Giebelgebirge* (Leipzig 1884) 17-19; ALBRIGHT, “A Catalogue”, 23; J. GRAY, “A Cantata of the Autumn Festival: Psalm LXVIII”, *JSS* 22 (1977) 2-26, here 16-17, 23 n. 1; KNOHL, “Psalm 68”, 12; IDEM, *Holy Name*, 47. And see Abraham ibn Ezra’s second commentary ad loc. The name, which presumably means “black mountain”, also belonged to a hill near Shechem (Judg 9,48).

³⁵ For this phenomenon, see, e.g., E. TOV, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN 2012) 232-233.

³⁶ The assumptions of similar changes also underlie conjectural emendations by BHS in Hos 9,8; Ps 47,10; and Prov 2,17.

naturally from the first error, especially in antiquity when word division in writing was often expressed subtly or not at all ³⁷.

If the correct text in our verse is **ואף סוררים לשכני האהלים**, then it refers for the third time to captives taken by the addressee of the verse. The entire colon is then an object of the previous **לקחת**, “you took”, and it is a true parallel to the first two cola. The verse’s meter is 4:3:4, like that of the similar verse 7.

Like **ב** in the previous colon, the particle **ל** here expresses belonging or association ³⁸: the **סוררים** taken were members of the group called the Tent Dwellers — or, as we might say, the nomads. Such **סוררים** were already mentioned in verse 7 as those who **שכנו צחיחה**, “dwell in a dry land”. The word **סוררים** itself could mean “rebellious ones” in the sense of enemies, like **רשעים** in verse 3 and **איבים** in verse 24. But it is better understood as a nonstandard form of **אסירים**, “prisoners”, both in our verse and in verse 7, where it appears in formal parallelism with the latter word ³⁹.

I conclude by presenting the original form of Psalm 68,19 as conjectured herein, accompanied by a dynamic translation:

Ascending to the heights, you led away captives,	עלית למרום שבית שבי
You took gifts of men,	לקחת מתנות באדם
Yes, and prisoners from the nomads.	ואף סוררים לשכני האהלים

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SUMMARY

The third colon of Psalm 68,19, **ואף סוררים לשכן יה אלהים**, literally “And also rebellious ones to dwell Yah God”, is incomprehensible. It is proposed here, based on Judg 8,11, that the original text was **ואף סוררים לשכני האהלים**, meaning “Yes, and prisoners from the nomads”. This conjectured text accords with the focus on prisoners in the verse’s two other cola, with the mention of desert dwellers in the parallel verse 7, and with the geographical setting of the relevant section of the psalm.

³⁷ See, e.g., Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 196-197, 234-235.

³⁸ See *HALOT*, s.v. **ל**, definitions 10-11, 14-15.

³⁹ Verses 18-19 (like vv. 2-4 and Ps 7,7-8) are apparently based on the “Song of the Ark” (Num 10,35-36): **רבבות אלפי ישראל** (v. 18) corresponds to **רבבות אלפי שובא** (Num 10,36), and **שבית שבי** (v. 19) corresponds to **שובה** (Num 10,36). The latter correspondence involves the same kind of word play posited here with **סורר** turning into **אסיר**, which contextually must be from the root **ישב** or **שוב**, is changed here to **שבית שבי**, from the root **שבה**.

RECENSIONES

Vetus Testamentum

Joachim J. KRAUSE, *Die Bedingungen des Bundes*. Studien zur konditionalen Struktur alttestamentlicher Bundeskonzeptionen (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 140). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020. x-264 p. €114,00

The volume is the product of the author's Habilitationsschrift completed in 2019 and supervised by Prof. Dr. Erhard Blum at the Eberhard-Karls-Universität in Tübingen. After the usual chapters introducing the topic, rehearsing the history of research and certain hermeneutical practicalities, the volume presents three exegetical studies of distinct conceptions of Israel's covenant relationship with God. First, Krause takes up the conditional structure of the covenant according to the priestly conception (49-109). This is followed by a chapter devoted to the conditional structure of the covenant according to the deuteronomistic conception (111-163). Finally, the author explores the prophetic promise of a new covenant (165-206). The volume concludes with a chapter on the results and the theological significance of the investigation (207-224). The writing and presentation are clear and compelling, and the author has made a significant contribution to biblical studies by addressing one of the most important topics of Old Testament interpretation. Because his results challenge some of the most fundamental assumptions held by a majority of scholars today, the volume will certainly garner much well-deserved attention.

The author begins by locating the meaning and significance of Israel's covenant with YHWH in relationship (*verhältnis*) or an intentionally designed connection (*bewusst gestaltete Beziehung*). This is more than a subset of theological inquiry, as though it were one question in the broader field of theology, because the covenant relationship consists of both the call to enter into such a relationship and the response to that call (2). And this "covenant theology" is unique in the ancient world. Krause turns to the often cited parallel with the first incantatory plaque from Arslan Tash (assuming its authenticity), where it is said that the god Aššur and other deities "made an eternal covenant with us" (*krt ln 'lt 'lm*), that is, with the religious community associated with the plaque (cf. "An Amulet from Arslan Tash," trans. P. K. McCarter [*COS* 2.86:222-223]). While this has been identified as a non-Israelite expression of "covenant theology," Krause counters that (a) its apotropaic function is associated only with family piety and certainly no large social group, and that (b) any relationship with the deity is purely instrumental (to ward off evil), whereas relating to the deity is not an issue, and finally that (c) the humans to whom the deity is connected bear no obligations as a result of the arrangement and are, in fact, not required to make any response to the gods at

all (4-5). Consequently, it is still true that nothing like Israel's "covenant theology" has so far been found among their neighbors in the ancient Near Eastern context.

According to Krause, the aspect of conditionality in Israel's covenant theology distinguishes it from all such parallels in the ancient world, including the Neo-Assyrian succession treaty which is often compared to Deuteronomy. Conditionality is, in fact, its decisive characteristic. While conditionality has generally been neglected in much of the scholarship, some recent studies have begun to question the simplistic dichotomy between "conditional" versus "unconditional" when exploring Israel's understanding of the covenant (17-19). Indeed, this binary-coded question of "conditioned" versus "unconditioned" has long prevailed in Old Testament scholarship, and it continues to be instrumental in various theories of redactional strata in both the deuteronomistic and priestly traditions. Krause aims to reinvestigate the three great covenant conceptions of the Old Testament in order to determine the validity of the "conditional" versus "unconditional" distinction in each.

As might be expected in this discussion, the most contested question is the nature of the covenant in the priestly conception. Krause acknowledges that the majority of scholars assume the priestly conception is of a "pure" covenant of grace, and is diametrically opposed to the deuteronomistic understanding of the covenant as conditioned upon Israel's obedience. To make his case, Krause turns to a detailed consideration of the priestly covenant tradition *par excellence*, the story of YHWH's covenant with the ancestor Abraham and especially to a detailed consideration of Genesis 17 (61-81). He concludes that even this quintessential expression of P's covenant describes a mutual relationship, in general and in its particulars. The formula "between me and you" (בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ: Gen 17,2a.7a.10a.11b) denotes the covenant's mutuality, with obligations on both sides including the paraenesis of 17,1bβ as Israel's responsibility and the unilateral establishment of YHWH's covenant as God's in 17,2. Krause then turns to a reconsideration of the phrase בְּרִית עוֹלָם, which is used three times in Genesis 17 and most often understood as denoting inviolable eternity, that is, a conception of the covenant that is completely uncoupled from conditions of obedience on the part of the human partner. However, when properly understood in its context, Krause argues that it refers also to Israel's responsibility in the relationship, which he believes is supported by the phrase used elsewhere in P (73). Krause only briefly states in passing that the expression in the parallel occurrences in Genesis 9, similar to its occurrences outside the P materials, denotes an element of reassurance about the divine commitment to human partners in the aftermath of past catastrophic experiences, but without contradicting the main obligations of the human covenant partners (79-80). The notion of the "enduring covenant" (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) therefore incorporates both promise and obligation, and understood in this way the obligations remain part of the covenant whether or not specifically stated in the priestly presentation of covenant promises. As a result, the priestly conception of YHWH's covenant is that of a permanent inviolability, not because Israel could not break it but because YHWH keeps it, even and especially when Israel breaks it (108). While I am in agreement with the author on this point (as I have argued elsewhere), I nevertheless think more investigation is needed of the Noahic covenant as conditional,

especially now in light of the excellent case Krause has made here. He has thoroughly and helpfully clarified these points for Genesis 17 and elsewhere in P, and I only long to see more from his research as it relates to Gen 6,18 and 9,9,11-17.

Such profound (and in my view correct) conclusions about the priestly conception of the covenant have dramatic implications for other areas of Old Testament scholarship. If he is right, then P is not attempting to correct an earlier deuteronomistic conception of the covenant with its analogy to a political treaty. By means of a thorough investigation of the pertinent deuteronomistic passages, Krause clarifies that the covenant is made concrete through the gift of the land. And the conditions related to it are not about earning entry into it but about the way in which Israel must remain in it by living according to the relationship previously granted by YHWH (111-117; cf. 162-163). These conclusions about the priestly conception of the covenant stand at odds with the scholarly view that P aims to correct an earlier deuteronomistic conception of the covenant and its configuration. Indeed, from the deuteronomistic perception, the covenant stands or falls upon YHWH's grace and personal freedom rather than upon Israel's obedience, and therefore the priestly covenant theology is not correcting it. The two conceptions are different from each other but they are not contradictory, and there is no need to think of one correcting the other (127-128).

To his credit, Krause next takes up in an extended portion of the volume what he considers to be a third conception of Israel's covenant with YHWH — the prophetic promise of a new covenant (165-206). Underlying the work is the theological problem raised by the conditionality of the covenant generally; that is, since the covenant *is* conditional, is it therefore destined to failure due to Israel's inability to keep it? After thorough exegetical treatment of a number of passages, especially Jer 31,31-34, Krause concludes that the promise of a new covenant does not necessarily presuppose that the previous one ceased to exist. Rather, YHWH will place the new covenant in place of the one that was in effect until then. The prophetic promise of a new covenant also does not presuppose Israel's inability to uphold the covenant but offers instead an eschatological vision of the covenant that will ultimately be as perfect as YHWH has always intended it to be. This perfection of the covenant will be new in the sense that Israel will no longer be able to do anything other than live in a way that corresponds to YHWH's commandments in perfect communion with him (205-206).

By means of detailed exegetical treatment of three distinct conceptions of Israel's covenant relationship with God, Krause concludes that there is no such thing as an unconditional covenant in the Hebrew Scriptures. Indeed, in none of the three traditions does the condition or obligation have to do with the gift of the covenant itself, but only with its preservation. Or, as Krause puts it, "Es geht nicht um den Eintritt in den Bund, sondern um das Bleiben in ihm" (207). This is a bold and significant advance in biblical theology, and Krause is to be commended for forcing us to reconsider long-held dogmas in Old Testament studies.

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Otilia LUKÁCS, *Sabbath in the Making. A Study of the Inner-Biblical Interpretation of the Sabbath Commandment* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 97). Leuven, Peeters, 2020. viii-351 p. 15 x 23. €67,00

Questa dettagliata e informata monografia pone a tema l'importante istituzione dello Shabbat, un elemento determinante per la comunità ebraica di tutti i tempi, le cui radici possono essere biblicamente ricondotte alla storia della creazione e del cammino di Israele verso la Terra Promessa. Partendo dall'individuazione di due linee di pensiero riguardo a questo tema — una basata sull'associazione dell'ebraico *šbt* con l'accadico *šab/pattu* e l'altra imperniata sulle origini israelitiche dello Shabbat nel contesto di uno studio essenzialmente limitato ai comandamenti del Decalogo — la cui disamina denuncia una certa incompletezza nella comprensione del complesso fenomeno, lo studio si prefigge un'analisi più accurata sullo Shabbat nelle sue espressioni in vari comandamenti riportati all'interno di tutta la Bibbia ebraica.

Partendo dal presupposto che i comandamenti relativi all'osservanza dello Shabbat siano il risultato di interventi redazionali occasionati da finalità specifiche e differenti tra loro, la monografia dichiara una duplice intenzione: in primo luogo, descrivere la storia letteraria e redazionale di tali comandamenti e chiarirne il retroterra intellettuale e teologico implicito (294); in secondo luogo, studiare detti comandamenti, interpretandoli come indicatori di identità (225-292). A tal fine, muovendosi nell'ambito dell'interpretazione cosiddetta intra-biblica (*Inner-Biblical Interpretation*), l'opera si avvale di una metodologia che conta sui criteri della critica letteraria e redazionale applicati ad una lettura tradizionale a più livelli.

Nel primo capitolo, la monografia esordisce offrendo due spunti di riflessione: uno è rappresentato da un'analisi su vasta scala dello *status quaestionis* sull'argomento della ricerca, mentre l'altro consiste in un'esposizione ragionata della metodologia che sarà impiegata. Tenendo presente tale metodologia, il secondo capitolo stabilisce innanzitutto i criteri per identificare i comandamenti dello Shabbat mediante una fraseologia comune, per giungere alla loro categorizzazione finale in due forme: quella lunga e quella breve (103). Attraverso un'analisi diacronica che conta su meticolose argomentazioni strutturali e testuali, si afferma un rapporto letterario e redazionale tra questi comandamenti in una "cronologia relativa", che necessita di ulteriore approfondimento. Sulla scorta di ciò, il terzo capitolo giunge a mettere a frutto i risultati dell'analisi precedente: utilizzando i criteri di Marc Vervenne (105), l'autrice propone un'analisi diacronica dettagliata degli strati redazionali ravvisabili all'interno dei comandamenti, partendo da tre diverse prospettive (segnatamente la struttura, la terminologia e gli accenti ideo-teologici), corredando l'opera con considerazioni di esegesi intra-biblica che individuano le "ideo-teologie" che emanano dal testo. Tali attività redazionali implicite sono denominate alfabeticamente come gli strati A, B, C, D, E, F e G, costruiti l'uno sull'altro con successive rielaborazioni e integrazioni basate su specifiche convinzioni ideologiche. Nel contesto di questa nutrita attività redazionale, l'ampio comandamento dello Shabbat riportato in Es 31,12-17 richiede una discussione che tenga nel debito conto i legami con la profezia di Ezechiele: è perciò che il quarto capitolo, utilizzando i criteri di Lyon (185), si concentra

sulla ricezione e interpretazione intra-biblica del comandamento dello Shabbat nel libro di Ezechiele. Lo scopo di questo studio è quello di evidenziare l'uso del comandamento nel libro profetico, nel quadro della costruzione dell'identità del popolo per mezzo dello Shabbat, partendo dall'assunto che i comandamenti si trasformino in accuse profetiche nel contesto dell'esilio. Il risultato di tale ricerca apre in maniera quasi naturale ad ulteriori analisi di materiali extra-biblici, che costituiscono l'oggetto del capitolo successivo, l'ultimo della monografia. Con l'obiettivo dichiarato di comprendere lo Shabbat e i relativi comandamenti come indicatore di identità, il quinto capitolo porta così avanti lo studio, concentrandosi sul contesto storico, politico e sociale sottostante all'emergere e allo sviluppo dello Shabbat, e cercando di rispondere alle domande sull'identità dello Shabbat stesso. Tale ricerca, prendendo le mosse da una lettura sintetica degli strati redazionali individuati e dai riferimenti allo Shabbat in Ezechiele, rivela l'esistenza di uno sviluppo progressivo dei comandamenti dello Shabbat fin da prima dell'esilio, durante la sua durata, e perfino dopo il ritorno. In particolare, l'autrice suggerisce un'interpretazione del giorno dello Shabbat come fenomeno socio-legale e come indicatore di identità dei giudei in esilio e dei loro discendenti. La monografia si conclude, dunque, affermando che lo Shabbat non è semplicemente il risultato di una combinazione di tre diverse tradizioni — l'unità di tempo di 6 + 1 giorni; la consuetudine settimanale del riposo; lo Shabbat come il settimo giorno (295-296) —, ma anche il segno identitario della comunità giudaica durante e dopo l'esilio. In una tale prospettiva, il comandamento del sabato è metonimicamente inteso come la *pars pro toto* per indicare l'alleanza (296).

Mediante un ricorso sistematico e abile a diverse metodologie e approcci esegetici, la monografia conduce la sua argomentazione logica immergendosi nei più fini dettagli letterari tanto della critica testuale come di quella redazionale. Il valore specifico di un tale contributo nello studio dello Shabbat, con la sua scoperta dei diversi strati redazionali dei comandamenti ad esso relativi, consiste propriamente nell'identificare lo Shabbat come indicatore di identità nell'arco di tempo di "esilio e ritorno", secondo una complessa strategia compositiva.

A fronte di questo innegabile e indiscusso pregio della monografia, alcuni punti della discussione permangono nella loro criticità, generando nel lettore l'impressione che la loro comprensione potrebbe essere ulteriormente migliorata. La prima questione risiede nella fondamentale definizione dei criteri utilizzati per identificare i comandamenti dello Shabbat, che scaturisce dall'individuazione di tre elementi comuni a Es 20,8-11 e Dt 5,12-15, vale a dire: la stipulazione del periodo lavorativo per la durata di sei giorni; il riposo nel settimo giorno; il divieto di lavorare nel settimo giorno (56-58). Tuttavia, nella formalizzazione dei criteri, il terzo elemento viene ignorato senza alcuna spiegazione, nonostante il fatto che il divieto di lavorare il settimo giorno possa rappresentare una valida chiave di interpretazione dell'essenza dello Shabbat per almeno quattro ragioni: in primo luogo, il supposto *Ur-Dekalog* comporta che tutti i comandamenti originali abbiano la forma del divieto; in secondo luogo, ci sono altri comandamenti che proibiscono il lavoro nel settimo giorno e quindi possono far luce sul comandamento dello Shabbat; in terzo luogo, nella discussione su Es 31,14 l'autrice stessa riconosce l'importanza fondamentale del divieto di lavorare, ammettendo che avrebbe potuto avere forme più antiche (165); in quarto luogo — cosa più importante di tutte — il significato originale e primario del verbo *šābat* (etimologicamente affine al

sostantivo Shabbat) è per l'appunto "cessare, fermare", con l'implicazione di "smettere di fare qualcosa".

In considerazione di quanto appena detto, proprio l'interpretazione del verbo chiave *šābat* può essere considerata uno dei limiti più evidenti della monografia. Infatti, il significato originario e primario di questa radice è, come detto, "cessare, fermare", mentre il significato "riposare" — preferito nel lavoro in oggetto — risulta secondario e derivato. Nelle proprie osservazioni preliminari (c. 1), il saggio sembra non analizzare sufficientemente la relazione semantica tra questi due significati, come invece ci si sarebbe aspettato: in quasi tutto il corso dell'analisi, si assume per fondamentale il significato di "riposare", senza prestare adeguata attenzione al significato principale di "cessare, fermare" (114-116) anche quando questo risulta indispensabile. Infatti, Es 23,12, qualificato come appartenente allo strato redazionale fondamentale (strato B), fa una netta distinzione tra l'azione del cessare (*šbr*) e l'azione risultante del riposare (*nwh*) e dell'essere rigenerato (*npš*). Ora, un'interpretazione ambigua del verbo-chiave non può che influenzare radicalmente l'interpretazione complessiva della ricerca, e non propriamente a suo favore. A ben guardare, Lukács stessa condivide l'idea di Haag su una connessione semantica tra l'accadico *šab/pattu* e l'ebraico *šbt*, riguardo al significato di base "cessare, fermare"; d'altra parte, il verbo *šābat* con il significato "celebrare" e il sostantivo affine *šabbāt* non hanno nulla a che fare con l'accadico *šab/pattu*, come l'autrice stessa si trova costretta ad ammettere (116). Di conseguenza, in ragione del significato di base "cessare, fermare", sembra d'obbligo accettare se non altro la possibilità di una duplice origine dello Shabbat: l'una in relazione con i comandamenti dello Shabbat, che utilizzano l'ebraico *šbt* nel significato di "cessare, fermare", affermando, così, l'origine accadica dello Shabbat delle fasi lunari; l'altra, invece, attiene ai comandamenti dello Shabbat legati al sostantivo *šabbāt*, che non ha nulla a che fare con l'origine accadica. Tale lettura ha diverse e fondamentali conseguenze: può arrivare a ribaltare la conclusione di Lukács di un'origine unicamente israelitica dello Shabbat mediante la sua generica e quasi esclusiva interpretazione del verbo *šābat* nel senso di "riposare"; inoltre, richiede un'ulteriore analisi della complessa relazione tra l'accadico *šab/pattu*, l'ebraico *šbt* e l'ebraico *šabat/šabbāt* e, dunque, una conseguente riconsiderazione dell'esegesi degli strati redazionali dei comandamenti relativi allo Shabbat.

Un altro punto problematico è riscontrabile nella pretesa prova dell'esistenza della pratica dello Shabbat in epoca esilica. In realtà, tale dimostrazione risulterebbe fondamentale per sostenere la tesi che comprende i comandamenti dello Shabbat come indicatore di identità. Tuttavia — per quanto si dedichi non poco spazio nell'ultimo capitolo alla discussione sul *background* sociale, politico e teologico dei comandamenti dello Shabbat, specialmente nel contesto dell'esilio —, la monografia non sembra provare l'esistenza della pratica dello Shabbat nella comunità giudaica. L'unico vago riferimento allo Shabbat in epoca esilica sarebbe l'utilizzo del nome *Šabbatāya* (241-243) che, onestamente, non sembra aver la forza probatoria sufficiente a sostenere il peso di siffatta argomentazione.

Un'ultima considerazione che ha più che altro il valore di un suggerimento: lo studio sarebbe risultato più incisivo se avesse contemplato un approfondimento sul rapporto tra i comandamenti dello Shabbat, specialmente nei loro strati redazionali primitivi, e le due tradizioni israelitiche legate allo Shabbat, vale a dire lo Shabbat come parte del calendario lunare e come giornata non lavorativa nel contesto agricolo antico. Riteniamo che un adeguato approfondimento di tale

questione potrebbe contribuire a far luce sull'origine dei comandamenti dello Shabbat, a cominciare dalla loro ragion d'essere.

Al netto delle osservazioni sviluppate sopra, che vanno intese come umile contributo all'approfondimento del tema, resta il giudizio sostanzialmente positivo su una monografia che offre molte informazioni utili sullo Shabbat in generale e sui relativi comandamenti in particolare. In ordine alla sua metodologia, l'opera funziona come dettagliato e schematico modello di esegesi biblica, giovandosi dell'uso della critica letteraria e redazionale in prospettiva intra-biblica. In questa linea di giudizio, le problematiche che abbiamo rilevato possono essere positivamente considerate alla stregua di una porta aperta per ulteriori lavori sullo stesso argomento.

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Erwan CHAUTY, *Qui aura sa vie comme butin? Échos narratifs et révélation dans la lecture des oracles personnels de Jérémie* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 519). Berlin – Boston, MA, de Gruyter, 2020. xiii + 404 p. 15 x 23. € 99,95.

Con questa monografia Erwan Chauty, docente di esegesi biblica presso il Centre Sèvres (Parigi), pubblica la tesi di dottorato, elaborata sotto la direzione di Elena di Pedé (Facoltà di Teologia dell'Université de Lorraine) in co-tutela con Christoph Theobald (Centre Sèvres). L'interesse di fondo che guida l'analisi di Chauty è la relazione tra oracolo e narrazione nel libro di Geremia. La questione è approfondita attraverso lo studio di alcuni personaggi secondari, nominati in oracoli e racconti, e destinatari di oracoli personali. Lo studio esegetico approda ad una rinnovata comprensione teologica del concetto di rivelazione. Ad una prima parte (cc. 1–3) in cui si discutono i presupposti metodologici, fa seguito una seconda (cc. 4–8), dedicata all'analisi esegetica. Un capitolo di natura teologica (c. 9), in cui si discute l'apporto delle acquisizioni esegetiche alla categoria di rivelazione, precede la conclusione generale.

L'A. sceglie di affrontare la relazione tra oracolo e narrazione secondo una prospettiva marcatamente sincronica, fondata sull'analisi narrativa e orientata allo studio del testo masoretico di Geremia nella sua "forma finale" (1); l'apporto della LXX è lasciato deliberatamente a margine dell'indagine (1 n.1; 56-60). L'A. rende ragione delle sue scelte metodologiche a partire da una panoramica degli studi diacronici su Geremia (3-41); la comune percezione dell'illeggibilità del testo nella sua forma finale (38), l'attenzione alla storia del profeta o del libro, percepita da Chauty come un'alternativa alla ricerca del senso del testo (40), conducono quest'ultimo a reputare lo studio diacronico di Geremia inadeguato per rendere ragione dell'articolazione tra oracolo e narrazione. Chauty sceglie così di inserirsi nel solco degli studi sincronici su Geremia (41-62). Se da una parte è vero che l'analisi sincronica di Geremia non è una novità, è da notare che non tutti gli studi sincronici menzionati (e.g. Abrego, 42-43; Cucca e Rossi, 50-53)

sono funzionali ad offrire uno sfondo per la ricerca di Chauty, che segue un percorso di analisi narrativa. Rispetto agli studi di Di Pede (2005) e Osuji (2010) (43-50), Chauty si spinge in avanti, andando oltre le sezioni narrative di Geremia, per abbracciare l'articolazione tra oracoli e narrazioni lungo tutto il libro. Il problema affatto irrilevante che l'A. si trova ad affrontare è dunque la plausibilità di una lettura narrativa dell'intero Geremia. Chauty propone una soluzione, a partire da una ridefinizione delle categorie principali dell'analisi narrativa (e.g. narratore, intrigo e personaggio), desunta dalle teorie poetiche sulla narrazione (cf. Patron, Kuroda, 67-74) (cc. 2-3). Lo sforzo ermeneutico è poderoso (65-181), e conduce l'A. a due risultati principali: Geremia è identificato come un "racconto globale" (*récit global*), capace di produrre un "effetto narrativo globale" (121). Lo studio di alcune modalità sintattiche, con cui gli oracoli si uniscono alla narrazione, illustra un subordinamento dei primi alla seconda, rafforzando ulteriormente la proposta di lettura. L'idea di Geremia come "racconto globale" offre lo sfondo per la seconda acquisizione: la possibilità di considerare i personaggi a partire dal loro impatto sul lettore. Assumendo la definizione di *effet-personnage* (cf. in particolare Jouve, 138-142), si mette al centro non tanto la modalità con cui il narratore, il testo o i suoi redattori costruiscono i personaggi, ma piuttosto la modalità con cui il personaggio è costruito dal lettore. Dopo aver testato i presupposti metodologici su Pascur figlio di Immer (172-181), si entra finalmente nel vivo dell'analisi esegetica, dedicata a Ebed-Mélek; Baruch; Godolia e Sedecia (cc. 4-7). Per ogni figura si considera la collocazione all'interno del libro, con le varie occorrenze in cui compare, per poi approfondire l'impatto del personaggio sul lettore, le aspettative suscitate ma soprattutto gli enigmi lasciati aperti dal testo. La soluzione di questi ultimi sta nella memoria di lettura sollecitata da "echi" e "risonanze" interni a Geremia; questi consentono al lettore di costruire un ritratto del personaggio, e risolvere così domande, ambiguità ed enigmi presenti nel racconto. Proprio nella capacità di reperire e concatenare a cascata echi e risonanze sta il cuore dell'argomentazione esegetica. Se, ad esempio, la percezione positiva di Godolia è offuscata dalle "risonanze negative" che affiorano nel racconto del suo assassinio (239-241), il lettore trova una via di soluzione seguendo una serie di echi. Si scopre così che la fine cruenta del governatore, che rifiuta di credere all'annuncio di una sventura (240), rivelerebbe la sua affinità con i profeti di pace, Anania in particolare. La connessione tra Godolia e Anania sarebbe sostenuta a livello lessicale dall'impiego del sostantivo שָׁקֵר (40,16), e dalla formula di datazione in 41,1. Godolia muore nel settimo mese; benché in un anno diverso, anche Anania (28,17) muore nel settimo mese. Il nesso tra le due morti e dunque l'affinità dei due personaggi sarebbe confermato dal fatto che nessun altro evento è datato da Geremia al "settimo mese". La colpa di Godolia viene ulteriormente identificata in un "peccato di omissione" (243): se generalmente la radice שָׁבַע *ni*. è associata al nome di YHWH, in 40,9 il governatore giura senza fare a lui riferimento, non rammentandolo neppure successivamente (40,9) in connessione con la locuzione יָיָטֵב לָכֵם. L'assenza di Geremia e YHWH dal racconto del destino di Godolia confermerebbe l'allontanamento di quest'ultimo dal Signore.

La sezione esegetica si chiude con lo studio di Sedecia, di per sé non una novità negli studi geremiani (si veda in proposito la dettagliata rassegna di contributi offerta da Shelley L. Birdsong, *The Last King(s) of Judah* [FAT II 89; Tübingen 2017] 5-22). Chauty evidenzia tre prospettive sul personaggio: un re solidale con il suo popolo (Geremia 21 e 34), un re volubile (Geremia 37-39) e un re non

libero che non conosce il profeta (Geremia 52) (306). Attraverso lo spiazzamento delle attese su Sedecia il lettore sarebbe condotto ad una presa di posizione allineata con gli oracoli, capace di provocare in lui una scelta futura diversa da quella messa in atto dal re di Giuda, una scelta che possa prevenire un'altra eventuale catastrofe.

La ripresa teologica (c. 9) propone una revisione del concetto di rivelazione, alla luce del percorso di lettura svolto. L'esperienza del lettore, che costruisce il suo giudizio teologico a partire dalla relazione tra oracolo e narrazione, viene considerata un'effettiva esperienza di rivelazione. Dopo un'ampia riflessione, che intreccia la lettura di Geremia, con quella dei racconti evangelici e con questioni di cristologia, l'A. discute tre nodi critici rispetto alla tesi teologica proposta: il carattere definitivo della rivelazione, il canone, e la possibilità di una lettura non credente. L'approdo cui Chauty giunge è la sottolineatura della novità apportata dalla relazione tra Dio e il lettore della Scrittura al concetto di rivelazione. Qui la connessione con Geremia, recuperata successivamente nella conclusione generale (370-377), si diluisce: l'apporto specifico di Geremia alla lettura teologica proposta rimane un po' in ombra.

La monografia offre un percorso di analisi coerente con i presupposti e ben strutturato, e presenta diversi elementi di novità, a partire dalla proposta di una interpretazione sincronica e narrativa della relazione tra oracolo e narrazione in Geremia. Anche lo studio monografico dedicato a personaggi secondari del libro, con l'eccezione di Sedecia, presenta una novità. Dal punto di vista metodologico, è sicuramente stimolante la proposta di un avanzamento nella teoria narrativa applicata al testo biblico, con le acquisizioni derivanti dalle teorie poetiche sulla narrazione. Da apprezzare è anche la costruzione di un ponte tra esegesi e teologia, con la possibile applicazione dell'esegesi narrativa al concetto teologico di rivelazione.

Rimangono tuttavia alcuni elementi di criticità. La scelta di concentrarsi sul TM, identificato *tout-court* con la forma finale del testo, appare alla fine un po' riduttiva; lo stesso autore ne è consapevole, quando considera la possibilità di affrontare la LXX con questa chiave di lettura come una delle piste di riflessione da percorrere (375). La storia del testo, con le sue differenti tradizioni, potrebbe offrire rilevanti spunti interpretativi anche per uno studio narrativo dei personaggi. Da questo punto di vista, la monografia di Chauty non offre un progresso rispetto allo studio narrativo di Di Pede (2005), anch'esso limitato a GeremiaTM. La concatenazione di echi e risonanze intratestuali, su cui ricade il peso dell'argomentazione esegetica, presenta qualche fragilità, a partire dalla distinzione non sempre chiara tra eco e risonanza. Lo stesso Chauty è giustamente consapevole dei limiti della procedura, a cominciare dall'importanza dichiarata dei software per reperire le risonanze. L'A. stesso riconosce che gli echi di parole sono difficili da scoprire (294, n. 57), esplicitando l'utilità degli strumenti informatici per evidenziare i nessi lessicali. Se questo è il caso, come è possibile che risonanze difficilmente percepibili offrano al lettore la soluzione degli enigmi del testo?

Un'ultima considerazione riguarda l'operazione di costruzione del personaggio, spostata interamente sul lettore. L'idea di *effect-personnage*, che consente al lettore di costruire il personaggio, è elaborata sulla base del romanzo moderno, dove però la costruzione del personaggio da parte del lettore è preceduta da un'intenzione autoriale. È possibile applicare questa categoria a Geremia, per il

quale l'A. stesso riconosce la presenza di una storia redazionale? Nella costruzione del personaggio il lettore si appoggia sulle acquisizioni derivanti dal racconto, ma anche sulle proprie conoscenze enciclopediche (e.g. le conoscenze botaniche sul fico, discusse in riferimento a Geremia 24; 265-266). Questo comporta che si ottengano ritratti molteplici e diversi per lo stesso personaggio. Il rischio è quello di una frammentazione incontrollabile e impossibile da sottoporre a un giudizio critico, in quanto fondata sull'unico criterio che è la sensibilità del lettore con i nessi lessicali che egli riesce a reperire. Anche la descrizione del libro di Geremia come un *racconto globale* si fonda sulla risposta del lettore. Si tratta di una percezione in ultima analisi non falsificabile, e dunque forse difficilmente spendibile in ambito scientifico.

Tali domande aperte, di cui Chauty si mostra lucidamente consapevole, probabilmente potrebbero essere ulteriormente approfondite attraverso un ancoraggio più deciso al dato testuale, assieme all'attenzione alla storia del testo, a partire da un confronto con la LXX. In ogni caso, la monografia si pone come un testo di riferimento, con cui dovrà confrontarsi chi intende esplorare il libro di Geremia attraverso le lenti dell'analisi narrativa.

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Judith E. FILITZ, *Gott unterwegs*. Die traditions- und religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergründe des Habakukliedes (Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 36). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020. xiv-571 p. 18 × 24.5. €144,00

Dr. Judith E. Filitz studied Protestant Theology and Theatre Studies at Leipzig, Halle/Salle, and Jerusalem, and wrote the book under review as a work for promotion in the Protestant Theological Faculty at Leipzig under the direction of Prof. Dr. Angelika Berlejung. She currently serves as Vikarin in the Lippische Landeskirche.

To introduce her main concern with the manifestation of divine presence in the world of human beings, Filitz begins her work by positing the question, "Where does YHWH live?" i.e., Sinai, Jerusalem, Creation, Heaven? Noting that all of the "addresses" mentioned above are possible in biblical texts, she focuses on the hymnic composition in Habakkuk 3, which portrays YHWH travelling in a chariot over the earth (Hab 3,8.12). Recognizing that Habakkuk 3 has been understood as a theophanic text, she argues that the passage also demonstrates the influence of a processional advance that shows the influence of Mesopotamian cultic processions, such as those held in relation to the Akitu or New Year's celebration in various Mesopotamian cultures and time periods. She argues that the earliest kernel of Habakkuk 3 may be placed in relation to the Mesopotamian Akitu procession, such as the Babylonian Akitu celebration, in which images of the gods and goddesses of the nations are carried in procession through the streets of Babylon at the New Year to honor Marduk, the city god of Babylon. Four later successive redactions to this "kernel" in Hab 3,3-12* would expand the early hymn and

ultimately place it in the literary context of the Book of the Twelve Prophets. The substance of her work appears in chapters 2–7.

Chapter 2 focuses on the textual versions of Habakkuk 3, including the Masoretic Text, the Wadi Murraba'at Hebrew Scroll of the Twelve Prophets; the Nahal Hever Greek Scroll of the Twelve Prophets; the Septuagint Greek Text; the Barbarini Greek Text; the Greek translations of the Hexapla (Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion); the Peshitta; the Vulgate; and Targum Jonathan. A careful verse by verse study of Habakkuk 3 prompts her to conclude that the various versions wrestled with problems of language and content in Habakkuk 3, but the versions provide little assistance in the exegesis of the passage.

Chapter 3 examines the placement of Habakkuk 3 in the textual history of the book of Habakkuk. Her redaction-critical study of the text prompts her to conclude that Habakkuk 3 is a self-standing composition that is secondary to the book at large. She posits a four-stage history of composition for Habakkuk 1–2 that begins in the seventh century B.C.E. and culminates in its introduction into the Book of the Twelve. Habakkuk 3 begins with a kernel in vv. 3-12* that is defined by a combination of linguistic form, viz., syntax and semantics, together with content and poetic features. The song appears in two strophes, vv. 3-7* and 8-12*, which focus on theophanic and processional dimensions. Redactional additions include an astral expansion in vv. 4b, 6c, and 11a, which link with features of Habakkuk 1–2; an addition in vv. 13-15*, which focuses on the defeat of enemies and also links with features in Habakkuk 1–2; the anchoring in the Book of the Twelve in vv. 16c-17, which include links to Nahum; Zephaniah; and Joel, particularly in relation to the Day of YHWH; and the superscription and liturgical notices together with instances of *selâ* in vv. 1 and 19c.

Chapter 4 focuses on traditions and motifs in the earliest form of the Song, including YHWH's coming in v. 3a; divine majesty in vv. 3b-4*; YHWH's entourage, including the gods, Reshef and Dever in v. 5; the first confrontation with the inhabited world in v. 6-7; YHWH's anger against Yamm (the Sea) in v. 8a; YHWH's preparations for war in vv. 8b-9a; the uproarious response of the cosmos in vv. 9b-11a; YHWH's flashing weapons in v. 11b; and the two confrontations with the nations that inhabit the earth in v. 12. Altogether, she concludes that these traditions and motifs point to YHWH's divine dread brilliance (Akkadian, *melammu*) and the divine *mittu*-weapons employed to subdue enemies in the cosmos. Although the theophanic dimensions of the text remain in Filitz's analysis, she points to the military dimensions of the text that indicate association with the processional aspects of the Babylonian Akitu festival, which celebrates Marduk's defeat of Tiamat and creation of the cosmos. She places the dating of these motifs in a period ranging from 722 B.C.E. in the pre-exilic period through 515 B.C.E. in the post-exilic period. This range of dates would account for Judean interaction with Babylon.

Chapter 5 then takes up the question of the generic character of Habakkuk 3, viz., is Habakkuk 3 a theophanic text? Filitz retains the theophanic characterization of the text, but her analysis of theophanic motifs in epigraphic and inscriptional evidence, such as the Kuntilet Ajrud Inscriptions and others, demonstrates that theophanic motifs also appear in extra-biblical contexts. Such contexts also include the Gilgamesh rendition of the Flood narrative and materials pertaining to the weather god, Hadad of Aram, where the chariot and weapon motifs figure prominently. Such parallels suggest proximity to the processional aspects of the Enuma Elish.

Chapter 6 then turns to the question of whether the oldest kernel of Habakkuk 3 in vv. 3-12* constitutes a reflection of a procession. At 195 pages, this chapter constitutes the longest and most thoroughgoing discussion of the book. Filitz examines the nature of the ritual, procession, parade, pilgrimage, and performative character of the Mesopotamian phenomenon as a basis for asking if such processions appear in the Hebrew Bible. She builds upon the earlier work of Mowinckel, who posited such processional aspects for the celebration of an Israelite New Year Festival, and she points to narrative texts, such as 2 Sam 6; 1 Kgs 1,32-48; 12,26-33; and 2 Kgs 11,12-20, as well as hymnic texts, such as Psalms 24; 47; 68, and prophetic texts, such as Isa 30,29.32b; 46,1-2.6-7, to argue that such evidence exists. She then turns to a very thorough examination of the Akitu festival, which points to three known versions of the festival celebration in Uruk, Assur, and Babylon. Each has its own distinctive set of characteristics, including both agricultural and cosmological concerns as well as their distinctive gods, viz., Anu and Antu in Uruk, Assur in Assur, and Marduk in Babylon. The Babylonian Akitu festival emerges as the most important for comparison with Habakkuk 3, particularly due to its focus on the manifestation of Marduk in the world and its use of the combat myth to recount Marduk's victory over Tiamatu and his establishment of order in the cosmos. The motifs of the chariot, weapons, and the gods Reshef and Dever, point to an adaptation of the Babylonian Akitu procession to one ascribed to YHWH in Habakkuk 3.

Finally, chapter 7 considers Habakkuk 3 as an expression of a processional theophany that is the product of cultural contact between Judah and Babylon from the outset of the Exilic period through the end of the Babylonian Exile to express YHWH's role as the universal sovereign over humanity.

This study has much to commend, particularly in relation to its thorough study of the processional dimensions of the Akitu festival in Mesopotamia and its application to Habakkuk 3. Her conclusion that the portrayal of YHWH's armed advance against enemies on a chariot has much to commend it, although the solar aspects demand closer investigation in relation to an Egyptian or Judean set of motifs that underlie her conclusions concerning YHWH's *melammu*, "brilliance, aura". Furthermore, her consideration of the interpretative dimensions of the textual versions also recognizes the difficulties that ancient interpreters had in understanding this text, rather than seeing them as sources for rewriting the text.

But there are also questions to be raised. One is her reconstruction of the compositional history of this text. Her redactional history of the text, based in some instances only on fragments of verses, is often questionable. Her decision to view vv. 3-12* as the earliest kernel of the text is also questionable as the combat motifs in vv. 13-15 emerge naturally from the military dimensions of the (processional) advance. Her decision to tie vv. 16-18 into a redactional layer that links Habakkuk to the Book of the Twelve is also questionable, particularly in view of its reliance on the reference to the expression, *yôm šārâ*, "day of distress," which she ties into the *yôm yhwh* ("Day of YHWH") motif which is present in some other books of the Book of the Twelve. Doubts arise from the lack of uniformity in the Day of YHWH texts elsewhere in the Book of the Twelve as well as the variation in terminology evident in Hab 3,17 (Day of Distress) as opposed to the "Day of YHWH" language elsewhere. Doubts may also be raised concerning her association of Habakkuk 3 with surrounding texts in Nahum and Zephaniah, insofar as these connections are elsewhere established as *Stichwort* connections.

Of utmost importance is the question of YHWH's enemies in Habakkuk 3. Filitz is satisfied to limit them to the cosmological level as rebellious humans. But when Habakkuk 3 is considered in relation to Habakkuk 1–2, in which the prophet raises questions concerning YHWH's decision to bring the *kašdīm*, "Chaldeans," widely understood as a reference to the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C.E., the enemies that YHWH would confront in Hab 3,3-12.13-15, would likely be the Neo-Babylonian Empire itself. Even if the text is read in relation to the early post-exilic period, interpreters must note that Hag 2,2-24 envisions the possibility that Zerubbabel might serve as the focal point for a revolt against the Persian Empire, with its western administrative capital in Babylon. Filitz reads the text in relation to its cosmological and possibly eschatological dimensions, but such a text may well have very practical dimensions during the late monarchy and the early-Persian period restoration.

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Novum Testamentum

Eva GÜNTHER, *Wisdom as a Model for Jesus' Ministry*. A Study on the "Lament over Jerusalem" in Matt 23:37-39, Par. Luke 13:34-35 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 513). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020. xii-246 p. €79,00

This study is a slightly modified version of the author's PhD thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham in May 2017. In the preface she expresses thanks to a range of academic teachers at the University of Tübingen where she completed her first theological degree, particularly Prof. Peter Stuhlmacher. The next person she is indebted to is Prof. Roland Deines (University of Nottingham).

Already in the opening paragraph the author informs us as to what her book is about: "It traces the influence of Jewish wisdom tradition on the shaping of the earliest Christology. It is a well known concept, which invests Jesus with Wisdom's function of a *Schöpfungsmittler* that appears already in earliest Christian sources (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; John 1:1-3), and early patristic writers characterised the relationship between the heavenly Christ and God the Father by identifying Jesus with the pre-existent personified Wisdom of Proverbs 8. The present study explores a parallel development, which took place during the formation of the gospel traditions. Particularly the 'Lament over Jerusalem' in Matt 23:37-39 // Luke 13:34-35 [which the author names "The Jerusalem Word" JW] summarises Jesus' mission in terms reminiscent of Wisdom. As it can be shown that Wisdom had come to be seen as an agent in history in some prominent Second Temple texts, her role in Israel's history can be related to the ministry of the earthly Jesus".

There is a systematic treatment of the subject in seven chapters, and many subdivisions, with the eighth as conclusion, as follows: Chapter 1: Introduction: Wisdom Christology in the Jerusalem Word?; Chapter 2: The "Lament over Jerusalem" (7-34). The contents of chapters 3-8 will be indicated at the end of this review.

Günther notes that the seemingly unproblematic transfer of Wisdom's role to Jesus by the early Christian authors creates the impression that they saw Jesus as somehow related to Wisdom. The evangelist Matthew has been seen as a champion of this, since he twice substitutes Jesus as the subject of statements in Q: (1) in Matt 11,19 it is Jesus who is justified by his works, whereas in the parallel Luke 7,35 it is Wisdom who is justified by her children; and (2) in Matt 23,34 Jesus is the sender of prophets, whereas in the Lukan version (11,49) Wisdom is the sender of prophets. Günther notes the attempt of other authors to detect a Wisdom Christology as early as in the pre-synoptic sources, but she disagrees with this position and presents her own view as more subtle.

The so-called "Jerusalem Word" (JW) (Matt 23,37-39) she considers crucial to describe this more subtle approach. This logion, which has played a central role in determining Jesus' relationship to divine Wisdom, is almost identical in Matthew and Luke, as follows (Matthew's additions in square brackets): "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her, how many times I would gather your children as a bird gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. See, your house is left to you [desolate]. And I tell you, you will not see me [from now on] until you say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord". This logion is connected with another on prophets, with explicit mention of Wisdom in Luke, namely Matt 23,34-36, par. Luke 11,50-51 (Matthew's additions in square brackets): "Therefore, I send you prophets, wise men and scribes (Luke: Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles) some of whom you will kill [and crucify, and some of whom you will scourge in your synagogues] and persecute [from town to town] that [upon you may come all the righteous] the blood shed [on earth] from the blood of [the innocent] Abel to the blood of Zechariah [the son of Barachiah] whom you murdered (Luke: who perished) between the sanctuary and the altar (Luke: between the altar and the sanctuary). Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation (Luke: Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation)".

The central section of the work is Chapter Two, "The 'Lament over Jerusalem'", which is divided in two parts: (1) Introduction to the Jerusalem Word; (2) Survey of Exegetical Approaches to the Jerusalem Word. In the first part, first considered is the text of the Jerusalem Word in Q and its context in the Gospels. It is in different contexts in Luke and Matthew. Since its original context is uncertain, the pre-synoptic logion, whether it first appeared in Q or goes back to a dominical saying (as proposed by Felix Christ, *Jesus Sofia*, and Hengel), must be interpreted without reference to context. Next comes a detailed consideration of its content (with a host of views and references) followed by a heading on date and author. No single date or author is presented. For an early dating, all parts of the logion can be understood from a pre-resurrection Jewish perspective as a sapiential prophetic saying thematising the significance of Jesus' ministry. However, the origin of the logion has often been analysed as a Jewish prophecy, which has been edited and put on Jesus' lips by the Church, possibly as late as before the outbreak of the Jewish war (Bultmann, Steck, Suggs). The final section of part one

considers the oracle's form and integrity: a prophetic doom oracle, a dominical saying, or possibly the saying was not composed in one piece. She asks whether the logion may be a single, skilfully constructed composition which is purposely combining Jesus' ministry in the past, present and future to create a missionary statement.

She next gives a survey of exegetical approaches to the Jerusalem Word, in dialogue with some twenty-five writings on the matter. The survey is in two parts, the first on Jesus and Wisdom. The first topic examined is Matt 23,37-39 and par. understood as a Wisdom Word, with reference to the views of Strauss, Bultmann, Vermes. Then we have the views of O.H. Steck (at length): Matt 23,37-39 as a quotation of a Jewish tradition. In this section, A.J. Hanson's 1965 proposal is recalled arguing in favour of a trans-historical ministry of Jesus. Taking 1 Cor 10,4 as a point of departure, he emphatically claimed that Christ's appearance in the rock is not to be understood as a typology, but as a "real presence of the pre-existent Jesus in OT history" (something which seems totally at variance with the New Testament and Christian teaching: Jesus is like us in all things, born of a woman, under the Law). Next comes a treatment of the studies of M.J. Suggs, F. Bovon, F. Christ and C. Deutsch on "Wisdom-Christology in the Gospels"; then the work of H. Gese, "The Emergence of a Wisdom-Christology from Jewish Traditions"; and finally, in this first section, the study by B. Witherington: "Sapiential Features of Jesus' Earthly Life".

Günther devotes the second part of the chapter to the topic "Denial of a Wisdom-Christology in Matt 23,37-39 par.". She notes that exegetical approaches which deny that Jesus can be identified with Wisdom in the logion can be roughly divided into three groups: (1) the logion could be a prophecy given by the risen Jesus, whose envoys, sent post-Easter, had been rejected (U. Luz); (2) the saying only summarises Jesus' earthly ministry (N.T. Wright and J.D.G. Dunn); (3) the supra-historical agent in the logion is God rather than Wisdom (S.J. Gathercole, with the observation: "Without a reader's predisposition to identify Jesus with the divine Wisdom, it is far more difficult to catch the allusions to the wisdom tradition in 23:37-39"). The author engages in a dialogue with all the writers.

This is followed by a rather brief conclusion to this chapter and to the first part of the book. The main difficulty of the logion and its significance, she notes, is constituted by the relationship that is suggested between Jesus and a divine agent by interweaving the earthly ministry of the historical Jesus with the trans-historical ministry of a divine figure. In some ways the Jerusalem Word sets Jesus in relation to God's agency in salvation history, and the question remains whether the reference to Jewish Wisdom is intended to elucidate that relationship. Recent publications have made it increasingly clear that Matthew, while he does not hesitate to endow Jesus with functions of divine Wisdom, does not promote a Wisdom-Christology. He only uses Jesus' association with Wisdom to elaborate his Son-Christology. Günther reminds us that the main investigation of her book is guided by the question whether Jesus — and his contemporaries — could draw on a tradition of Wisdom acting in the historical world, which may have supplied the themes and formed the structure of Jesus' ministry as it is summarised in the "Lament". The work, she notes, will also consider in what way Wisdom's relation to God provides a template for the way in which Jesus represents God.

This is precisely what she does in the last six chapters of the book (3-8), with examination of what are considered the appropriate Jewish Wisdom passages:

Ch. 3, “Wisdom’s Function in the Jewish Tradition” (Proverbs and Job; Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch, personification of Wisdom); Ch. 4, “Wisdom as Sender of the Prophets” (Prov 1,20-33; with excursus: “The Angel of the Lord”); Ch. 5, “Wisdom as Agent of Salvation History” (Wisdom of Solomon, with conclusion: “Wisdom as Agent in History in the Wisdom of Solomon and Matt 23,37-39 par.); Ch. 6, “Wisdom as Manifestation of God’s Presence in Sir 24”; Ch. 7, “Wisdom Withdrawing from the Earth and United with the Heavenly Son of Man in the Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71)”; Ch. 8, “Conclusions: Jesus’ Exalted Role in the Jerusalem Word”.

Readers will be grateful to the author for her dialogue with the literature on the subject, the presentation of her own view and of the presumed support in Jewish Wisdom literature. Some readers and specialists will have questions on the relevance of some of the Jewish Wisdom texts for the Jerusalem Word, and on other matters. But this fine study, the fruit of deep research with rich documentation, will be welcome as a significant addition to the subject.

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Michael A. DAISE, *Quotations in John*. Studies on Jewish Scripture in the Fourth Gospel (The Library of New Testament Studies 610). London, T&T Clark, 2020. xii-248 p. 16 × 24. £85.00

El trabajo que presentamos es la revisión de un estudio realizado por M. Daise entre los años 1998 y 1999 en *École Biblique et archéologique française* de Jerusalén, bajo la dirección de Marie-Émile Boismard.

El estudio aborda seis citas de las Escrituras presentes en el cuarto evangelio: Is 40,3 (Jn 1,23); Is 53,1 y 6,10 (Jn 12,37-41); Sl 69,10 (Jn 2,17); Sl 118,25-26 y Za 9,9 (Jn 12,13-16). Consta de una introducción y cinco capítulos, separados en tres grandes partes. La primera explora las tres citas de Isaías, tratadas en los capítulos 1 y 2. La segunda está dedicada a las citas restantes, que se abordan en los capítulos 3 y 4. La tercera parte incluye el capítulo 5, en el que se exponen, a modo de conclusiones, las principales consecuencias teológicas del estudio. Cierran el trabajo dos apéndices, la bibliografía, un índice de fuentes antiguas y un índice de autores modernos. El apéndice 1 presenta lo que importantes estudios exegéticos sobre el tema (obras de Franke, Braun, Freed, Reim, Schuchard, Menken, Obermann, Clark-Soles y Sheridan) han indicado acerca de los lugares en los que el cuarto evangelio cita las Escrituras. El apéndice 2 está dedicado a las citas concretas de las Escrituras en cada caso.

Una de las principales tesis del autor es que las citas de las Escrituras que aborda, al tener características comunes significativas, se comprenden mejor si se las considera juntas que de manera aislada. Dichas citas constituyen a su juicio dos grupos. Las que forman parte del primero van acompañadas de una fórmula que las relaciona explícitamente con el profeta Isaías (Jn 1,23; 12,38.39), mientras que las que forman parte del segundo se vinculan a la anámnesis postpascual de los discípulos (Jn 2,22; 12,16). Daise propone asimismo que los

textos estudiados forman una estructura quíastica: A (Isaías) – B (recuerdo) – B' (recuerdo) – A (Isaías).

En la introducción, el autor expone un breve estado de la cuestión, dando cuenta de los principales estudios que se han ocupado de las referencias escriturísticas del cuarto evangelio. En esta sección se incluyen obras recientes sobre el tema, mostrando la revisión y actualización que se ha hecho del trabajo. Señala también la pertinencia de acercarse a este tema según lo que él denomina “acercamiento tradicional”, saliendo al paso del cuestionamiento que dicho acercamiento ha recibido por parte de estudios recientes. En esta parte se da cuenta asimismo de la metodología que va a seguirse, los pasos que se darán en el análisis de cada cita así como algunos principios y presupuestos que regirán la valoración de los datos. Buena parte del estudio de Daise estará, de hecho, dedicada a establecer qué versión o tradición textual se encuentra detrás de cada cita (en todos los casos se concluye la procedencia de la Septuaginta), al análisis de las diferencias respecto de la fuente y a explicar el sentido final del texto. A este respecto, es de agradecer la presencia de numerosas tablas que van presentando los pasajes analizados, facilitando la comprensión de los argumentos por parte del lector.

En el capítulo 1 se estudia la referencia a Is 40,3 que el evangelio coloca en boca del Bautista (Jn 1,23). Se analizan con detenimiento la introducción del pronombre de primera persona (ἐγώ), ausente en la Septuaginta, y la sustitución del verbo ἐτοιμάζω de dicha versión por εὐθύνω. En este último caso, tras considerar la interpretación que se hace de Is 40,3 en los escritos de Qumrán (1QS viii 10-16; 1QS ix 12-21), se concluye que la exhortación del Bautista a enderezar el camino del Señor tiene un sentido relacionado con la fe en Jesús como el enviado del Padre (cf. Jn 6,29), tema, por otra parte, presente en los lugares del evangelio donde aparece este personaje (1,7.35-37; 10,41-42). A juicio de Daise, Dios habla en esta escena a través del Bautista, y lo central de su mensaje es la llamada que hace a los judíos a la fe.

El capítulo 2 está dedicado al resto de citas de Isaías: Is 53,1 (Jn 12,38) y 6,10 (Jn 12,40). Dado que el cuarto evangelio ha incorporado el texto de Is 53,1^{LXX} sin cambio alguno, su análisis es notablemente más breve que el de Is 6,10. En este último caso, hay diferencias sustanciales entre la BH y los LXX; por otra parte, la cita joánica del pasaje posee semejanzas y divergencias tanto respecto al texto hebreo como al griego. El estudio conduce a Daise a concluir que, mientras la cita de Isaías en 1,23 constituía una llamada a los judíos a la fe (quiasmo, A), las que encontramos en Jn 12,37-41 son una lamentación por la increencia (quiasmo, A'). Las dos preguntas de 12,38, que siguen de cerca Is 53,1^{LXX}, son retóricas y expresan que, si bien el brazo del Señor se reveló a todos, ninguno ha creído. Daise profundiza en esta parte en el sentido de los signos en el cuarto evangelio y propone que éstos sirven únicamente en el caso de quienes no creen en las palabras de Jesús (10,37-38; 14,10-11). Por otra parte, el análisis conduce al autor a concluir que el sujeto de los verbos τυφλώω y παρόω en 12,40 es el “jefe de este mundo” (cf. 12,31); lo que está en juego en esta sección no es la respuesta de Dios a la obstinación de los judíos sino la causa de la misma: la actividad de dicho jefe de este mundo.

El capítulo 3 está dedicado a la cita de Sl 69,1 en Jn 2,17, texto unido al recuerdo de los discípulos (ἐμνήσθησαν). En este caso hay una nueva alusión al recuerdo en 2,22 (ἐμνήσθησαν). Aunque lo que se recuerda en este último versículo no es una cita de las Escrituras sino las palabras de Jesús, Daise considera

que esta alusión está ligada a la cita de 2,17 así como a 12,16. Por otra parte, el autor expone y justifica la hipótesis (ya planteada por exégetas como Brown o Lindars, entre otros), de que en un estadio temprano de la tradición ambas citas-recuerdo iban juntas y en orden inverso al actual (12,12-16; 2,13-17; 12,18-22). El análisis de esta parte se centra, sobre todo, en las razones y significado del cambio del tiempo verbal de *κατεσθίω*, en aoristo en los LXX (*κατέφαγεν*) y en futuro en el cuarto evangelio (*καταφάγεται*). Daise, siguiendo la interpretación más extendida, considera este cambio una prolepsis de la muerte y resurrección de Jesús. Señala asimismo su relación con los dos nuevos templos metafóricos que, según el cuarto evangelio, surgirán tras la Pascua: el santuario del cuerpo de Jesús (2,19.21) y la casa del Padre (14,2), también presentada como morada del Padre y del Hijo a través del Espíritu en los creyentes (14,23). Tras presentar la relación que había en el mundo antiguo entre el establecimiento de una nueva dinastía y las construcciones de templos (un ejemplo de ello sería la reconstrucción del Templo de Jerusalén hecha por Herodes el Grande), Daise plantea que esta sección del evangelio posee connotaciones reales: Jesús, al anunciar la destrucción de un templo y el levantamiento de otro identificado con su cuerpo (2,19.21), estaría aludiendo prolépticamente a la nueva dinastía que surgirá tras su muerte y resurrección.

El tema dinástico es retomado por el autor en el capítulo 4, que se ocupa de Sl 118,25-26 y Za 9,9 (Jn 12,13-16). En el caso de Sl 118,25-26, Daise justifica su carácter de cita. Explica asimismo el origen de la expresión *ὁσαννά* y analiza la razón y consecuencias de la introducción joánica del título “rey de Israel”. A juicio del autor, la expresión forma una inclusión literaria con Jn 1,49, los dos únicos lugares del cuarto evangelio donde se utiliza. Propone que ambos versículos están influidos por So 3,13-15, pasaje que alude al rey de Israel y hace referencia a la ausencia de engaño en el pueblo (cf. Jn 1,47). En lo que respecta al análisis de Za 9,9, el autor destaca el cambio que hace el texto respecto a la Septuaginta al presentar a Jesús sentado (*καθήμενος*). Éste es un rasgo característico de la dignidad real, ya que otros lugares de la Escritura describen de este modo a reyes y jefes entrando en Jerusalén (Jn 17,24-25; 22,3-4). Al igual que en 2,17-22, Jesús es también aquí presentado como iniciador de una nueva dinastía. Además, el autor descubre en el texto motivos relacionados con el Reino del Norte (rey de Israel en 12,13 y alusiones a Jacob en 1,51 y 4,6) y con el Reino del Sur (dependencia de la expresión “pollino de asna” [Jn 12,15] de Gn 49,11^{LXX}, versículo que forma parte del oráculo sobre Judá), que le conducen a realizar una propuesta novedosa: Jesús será rey de un reino unificado. Si bien es claro, y así lo muestra el considerable consenso de los estudios sobre el tema, que uno de los ejes principales de Jn 12,12-19 es la paradójica realeza de Jesús (en tanto que altera, como subrayará el relato de la Pasión, la comprensión más extendida de la misma), la propuesta de Daise sobre el reino unificado requería, a nuestro juicio, mayor justificación.

El capítulo 5 tiene dos partes. En la primera, el autor presenta de manera resumida algunos aspectos derivados de la estructura quiástica A-B-B'-A'. La exhortación del Bautista a la fe (A) concluye con su rechazo a causa del jefe de este mundo (A'). Este rechazo conduce a la muerte y resurrección de Jesús, acontecimientos que restaurarán la monarquía dividida (B y B'). La falta de fe de los judíos (A y A') se opone a la fe de los discípulos que recuerdan episodios de Jesús después de la Pascua (B y B'). En la segunda parte, Daise agrupa las

implicaciones teológicas derivadas del quiasmo en cinco temas que desarrolla con brevedad: cristología, soteriología, escatología, eclesiología y pneumatología.

En conclusión, nos encontramos ante un estudio detallado de necesaria consulta para todo aquel que desee profundizar en el uso que hace el cuarto evangelio de las seis citas de las Escrituras que aborda.

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Isaac D. BLOIS, *Mutual Boasting in Philippians. The Ethical Function of Shared Honor in its Biblical and Greco-Roman Context* (The Library of New Testament Studies 627). London, T&T Clark, 2020. xv-207 p. 16.5 × 24. €103,50

Il libro rappresenta la versione rivista di una dissertazione dottorale discussa all'Università di St. Andrews, sotto la direzione del prof. Scott Hafemann. L'autore è professore assistente di Nuovo Testamento al Torrey Honors Institute, Biola University, USA. Dopo l'indice contenutistico, i ringraziamenti e le abbreviazioni, segue l'introduzione (1-35), in cui l'autore da subito chiarisce che nel suo lavoro egli intende concentrarsi sul tema del mutuo onore nella lettera ai Filippesi, quello cioè condiviso tra Paolo, i Filippesi e il Dio al quale insieme rendono culto. Egli tratterà tale soggetto, tenendo conto sia del contesto greco-romano della lettera, sia di quello scritturistico e soffermandosi sui due passaggi di Fil 1,25-26 e 2,14-16. Blois riconosce che alcuni autori prima di lui hanno posto attenzione al mutuo onore tra Paolo e i Filippesi in Fil 2,16 e 1,26, tuttavia essi non si sono soffermati sulla fonte di questa idea e sulla modalità con la quale il vanto reciproco è sviluppato dal punto di vista retorico da Paolo. Così l'autore con la sua ricerca intende colmare tali lacune. In seguito, dopo aver fornito una definizione di mutuo onore, Blois afferma che l'onore ha un ruolo significativo all'interno della lettera e che i due succitati passaggi sono fondamentali nella struttura di Filippesi. Tuttavia, se la prima affermazione viene provata, la seconda si dà per scontata, senza alcuna dimostrazione. In ogni caso, l'introduzione è conclusa con una storia della ricerca riguardante le tre aree più pertinenti al tema che sarà investigato: il vanto in Paolo, la presenza della Scrittura nella lettera, la κοινωμία tra Paolo e i Filippesi. Anche per quest'ultimo aspetto si deve purtroppo notare che l'autore afferma che esso è un tema centrale in Filippesi, senza soffermarsi a provarlo.

Segue quindi la prima parte (37-74), dedicata alla gloria mutuale nelle Scritture giudaiche. Qui si pone particolare attenzione ai testi di Dt 26,19^{LXX} e Is 49,4^{LXX}, ai quali Paolo farebbe allusione in Fil 2,14-16. In particolare l'Apostolo sarebbe l'unico autore giudaico che afferma di condividere un onore mutuale con il popolo di Dio.

Il primo capitolo (41-56) di questa prima parte fa riferimento nel titolo a καύχημα come segno di mutuo onore nel Deuteronomio. In effetti, l'autore comincia con un'affermazione che deve essere ancora da lui provata: il mutuo onore è essenziale per comprendere la relazione di alleanza tra Dio e il suo popolo, così come è

presentata nel quinto libro del Pentateuco. Poi si passa a ritrovare tale soggetto nel Cantico di Mosè di Deuteronomio 32^{LXX} e si collega questo testo con Dt 26,16-19^{LXX}, dove l'onore mutale tra Dio e il suo popolo si mostrerebbe come strettamente legato alla relazione di alleanza. In particolare, Blois enuclea una triade onorifica in Dt 26,18-19 (ὄνομαστὸν καὶ καύχημα καὶ δόξαστον), che legge come benedizione derivante dall'alleanza e che cerca di vedere riflessa in altri passaggi dei LXX, e collega 26,19, dove Israele è il vanto di YHWH, con 10,21, dove invece YHWH è il vanto (ancora καύχημα) di Israele. Degna di nota in questo capitolo è anche l'affermazione secondo la quale i profeti estenderanno in senso escatologico la benedizione legata all'alleanza e al καύχημα, e questa estensione sarebbe essenziale per la comprensione di Paolo, la cui idea di compimento escatologico includerebbe indubbiamente l'onore escatologico per il popolo della nuova alleanza (54). Posizione che non ci risulta mai effettivamente giustificata nel libro e che appare piuttosto desunta e rielaborata a partire dalle idee del *Doktorvater* Scott Hafemann (cf. S.J. HAFEMANN, *Paul: Servant of the New Covenant*. Pauline Polarities in Eschatological Perspective [WUNT 436; Tübingen 2019]).

Il secondo capitolo (57-74) si muove quindi in ambito profetico e ha come tema la gloria mutuale in Isaia. Anzitutto l'autore parte con il mostrare l'esclusiva gloria di Dio nel testo profetico, poi passa alla gloria conferita ad Israele da parte di Dio stesso e a quella della figura del Servo collegata con il popolo eletto (con una specifica attenzione a Is 49,4^{LXX}, dove si usa δοξασθήσομαι). La conclusione è che in Isaia è possibile vedere una triplice gloria mutuale, secondo la quale YHWH onora sia Israele che il Servo, il Servo onora YHWH e facilita l'onore di Israele, Israele onora YHWH e riconosce l'onore del Servo accettando fedelmente il suo ministero. Anche qui è da rilevare il richiamo anticipato a Paolo, poiché, secondo Blois, egli ricoprirebbe il ruolo del Servo in Fil 2,16 così da partecipare al mutuo onore goduto dal Servo insieme con Dio e il popolo di Israele (58).

La seconda parte (75-108) del libro è dedicata, secondo il titolo, all'onore mutuale nell'antichità romana, ma in effetti il discorso è ampliato all'intero mondo ellenistico. In tale contesto quello dell'onore è un elemento culturale fondamentale che riveste un ruolo importante anche nell'ambito persuasivo. Così lo stesso Paolo in Filippesi utilizzerà il motivo dell'onore mutuale per convincere i convertiti romanizzati di Filippi a condurre una vita degna del vangelo (76).

In un primo capitolo (79-91) ci si sofferma sull'influenza e la mutualità dell'onore nel mondo ellenistico e romano. Così l'autore parte dall'onore come mezzo per esercitare un'influenza sugli altri nel mondo ellenistico e romano — fatto reso particolarmente vivido dalle tipiche lettere di raccomandazione romane —, passando poi nello stesso contesto alla mutualità dell'onore, vissuta sia all'interno della famiglia, sia nel rapporto genitori-figli, sia nell'amicizia, sia nella relazione maestro-studente. Da notare che Blois accenna senza nominarla alla forma letteraria della *periautologia*, ovvero elogio di sé (82), dove avrebbe potuto ritrovare tra i suoi espedienti, al fine di renderla accettabile, proprio quello di mescolare la lode di colui che parla con quella dell'uditorio (cf. Plutarchus, *Mor.* 542B), così da mostrare una vera e propria mutualità dell'onore.

Un secondo capitolo (95-108) è dedicato all'onore in quanto motivazione per l'agire nel mondo ellenistico e romano. L'autore vede quindi l'onore mutuale come una strategia retorica utilizzata sia nell'epistolografia classica, sia nelle lettere derivanti dai papiri. In particolare, si sofferma sull'onore mutuale come strategia

motivazionale all'interno dei corpi epistolari romani di Cicerone, Seneca e Fronto. Così Blois mostra molto bene come chi scriveva la lettera incitava il destinatario a compiere azioni virtuose in ragione del conseguente onore condiviso che poteva derivarne.

La terza e ultima parte (109-161) è dedicata all'onore mutuale in Filippesi, focalizzando l'attenzione ai passaggi di 1,26 e 2,16, letti nel contesto scritturistico e in quello culturale delineati dai capitoli precedenti.

Il primo capitolo (113-127) si occupa dell'onore mutuale in Fil 1,25-26, dove Paolo costituisce un *καύχημα* per i Filippesi. L'autore cerca di dimostrare che la decisione dell'Apostolo, segnata dal sacrificio personale di ritornare dai Filippesi, promuove il mutuo onore che esiste tra lui e i suoi fratelli nella fede di Filippi e lo pone come modello degno di imitazione che contribuisce alla crescita nella fede e all'abbondante vanto dei destinatari. Si deve rilevare come nel contesto del passaggio Blois ritrovi l'utilizzo di una metafora militare, cosicché in 1,26 Paolo si presenterebbe come il capitano dei Filippesi che con il suo ritorno li spingerebbe all'assalto finale per giungere alla gioia e al vanto nella sfera di Cristo (121): lettura certo originale, ma priva di alcun fondamento testuale nel versetto.

Nel secondo capitolo (129-150) si sofferma sul passaggio di 2,14-16, nel quale i Filippesi, con il loro irreprensibile comportamento, costituiscono motivo di *καύχημα* per Paolo. In particolare in Fil 2,16 l'Apostolo richiamerebbe direttamente il testo di Dt 26,19^{LXX}, mostrando, a beneficio dell'identità e dell'agire dei destinatari, il compimento escatologico della benedizione derivante dall'alleanza e offerta a Israele in ragione della sua obbedienza alla stessa alleanza. Inoltre Paolo si approprierebbe del testo di Is 49,4, letto nel suo contesto, e della relativa figura del Servo da esso evocata, ponendosi come lui all'interno della relazione di mutuo onore tra Dio e il suo popolo, ora rappresentato dagli stessi credenti di Filippi.

Nel terzo capitolo (151-161) l'autore spiega come l'invito all'onore mutuale derivante dalla Scrittura permette a Paolo di motivare i Filippesi cosicché possano rispondere in modo appropriato alle sue esortazioni per la fedeltà e l'obbedienza a Cristo.

La brevissima conclusione (163-164) chiude in maniera lapidaria il percorso di studio. Il volume, che dal punto di vista editoriale appare impeccabile, termina con un'amplissima lista bibliografica in inglese, francese, tedesco ed italiano (165-186). Ad essa seguono quattro indici: quello degli autori moderni, degli antichi citati, delle citazioni bibliche e delle principali tematiche trattate.

Nell'insieme il libro affronta un tema originale e interessante perché appena accennato negli studi su Filippesi. L'autore dà prova di una grande conoscenza dell'Antico Testamento così come dell'antichità greco-romana con i suoi testi, mentre correda lo studio con numerose e ricche note a piè di pagina, utili per ulteriori approfondimenti. D'altronde, oltre ai limiti evidenziati nel riassumere il contenuto del lavoro e spesso consistenti in affermazioni non dimostrate, dobbiamo dire che la parte analitica relativa a Fil 1,25-26 e 2,14-16 è quella che ci risulta meno convincente, non solo per l'esegesi un po' sommaria e poco attenta al contesto letterario di questi passaggi, ma soprattutto per le supposte allusioni a Dt 26,19^{LXX} e Is 49,4^{LXX} in Fil 2,14-16. Infatti, tra il primo testo e Fil 2,14-16 c'è in comune soltanto il sostantivo *καύχημα*, mentre con il secondo esclusivamente il verbo *ἐκοπίασα*, legami molto tenui per dimostrare una vera e propria

allusione (al contrario si vedano i numerosi richiami terminologici tra Fil 2,15 e Dt 32,5^{LXX}). Inoltre Blois estende il riferimento a tutto il contesto di partenza di ciascuna allusione, sostenendo sin dall'inizio la necessità di leggere in questo modo i rimandi scritturistici in Paolo (19-21). Da parte nostra crediamo esattamente il contrario; infatti, nei suoi testi l'Apostolo, mostrando una libertà presente anche nell'esegesi rabbinica, non cambia solo il testo della citazione ma anche più volte ne muta il senso in base ai suoi scopi argomentativi (ad es. Rm 10,5; 1 Cor 6,16; Gal 3,13), apparendo quindi chiaro che la tensione tra il contesto di partenza e di arrivo della citazione o dell'allusione è risolta a favore di quest'ultimo. Infine, altra grossa questione sollevata dall'autore, è quella di utilizzo della categoria di popolo di Dio per parlare dei credenti in Cristo dei Filippesi. Infatti nei suoi testi Paolo non designa mai la chiesa come popolo perché Israele rimane il popolo di Dio che non è sostituito dalla chiesa nel piano divino (cf. Romani 9–11) e perché quest'ultima, in quanto corpo di Cristo, ha una dimensione escatologica non opportunamente inquadrabile in una realtà organizzativa terrena. In ogni caso, anche questi ultimi interrogativi che il libro ha suscitato ci confermano nell'idea che il lavoro di Blois merita di essere letto con attenzione dagli studiosi paolini.

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Thomas WITULSKI, *Die sieben Sendschreiben Apk 2–3. Studien zu ihrer Entstehung und ihrem Verhältnis zum apokalyptischen Hauptteil Apk 4–22* (Biblical Tools and Studies 39). Leuven, Peeters, 2020. viii-450 p. 16.5 × 24.5. €96,00

In seiner Studie widmet sich Witulski (= W.) als ausgewiesener Spezialist für die Offenbarung des Johannes dem literarischen wie historischen Verhältnis zwischen deren sieben Sendschreiben (Offenbarung 2–3) und dem apokalyptischen Hauptteil (Offenbarung 4–22). „Untersucht werden soll, ob diese beiden zentralen Textblöcke dieses letzten Buches des Neuen Testaments in gleicher Zeit und in einem Zug oder zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten entstanden und sekundär zu einer textlichen Einheit zusammengefügt wurden“. (1) Damit einhergehend entscheidet sich für W. die Frage, ob das Werk vor einem einheitlichen zeitgeschichtlichen Hintergrund zu verstehen ist oder bei sekundärer Verbindung der Sendschreiben mit der eigentlichen Apokalypse „Einblicke in die Geschichte der Entwicklung des Christentums in der römischen Provinz *Asia* und in die Geschichte der Entwicklung des paganen Umfelds desselben zu vermitteln vermag“. (3) Die Datierungsfrage der Johannesoffenbarung wird also einmal mehr von W. mitverhandelt. Die Gesamthese, die darauf abzielt, eine gesellschaftliche Lage zur Entstehungszeit von älteren „Rudimentärsendschreiben“ herauszuarbeiten, die vom Kaiserkult noch nicht gekennzeichnet waren, was sich zum Zeitpunkt, als der apokalyptische Hauptteil entstand, dann dramatisch änderte, darf wohl auch als Versuch gewertet

werden, die von W. andernorts vorgetragene Einordnung der Johannesoffenbarung in die Zeit Hadrians (vgl. 428) zu stützen.

Nach Darlegung des Forschungsstandes zur anstehenden Thematik (5-23), methodischen und inhaltlichen Vorklärungen (25-144), die sich u.a. mit der anzuwendenden literarkritischen Methode, der Gattung der Sendschreiben sowie dem Verständnis der *ἄγγελοι τῆς ἐκκλησίας* befassen, rücken die Sendschreiben selbst ins Zentrum (115-396). Sie werden einer eingehenden Einzelanalyse unterzogen, wobei ein besonderes Augenmerk dem Verhältnis von Botenspruch, Weckruf und Überwinderspruch zum Rest des jeweiligen Sendschreibens gilt, was im Ergebnis zur komplexen Hypothese eines mehrstufigen Wachstumsprozesses der sieben Sendschreiben führt. (Das genaue Schichtenmodell wird in einer vierspaltigen Tabelle mit Text geboten [386-396].) Dieser Befund mündet in Überlegungen zum zeitlichen wie literarischen Verhältnis von Offb 1,4 – 3,22, als sich ebenfalls einem mehrstufigen Entstehungsprozess verdankende Einheit, zu Offenbarung 4–22 (397-425). Eine thesenhafte Präsentation der Ergebnisse der Studie (427-428) sowie ein Literaturverzeichnis, Stellen- wie Autorenregister (429-450) runden den Band ab.

In den beschriebenen Arbeitsschritten entwickelt W. näherhin die These, dass Sendschreiben und apokalyptischer Hauptteil ihre Entstehung unterschiedlichen Autoren und unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten verdanken. Mittels sprachlicher wie inhaltlicher Unterschiede werden Weckruf und Überwinderspruch literarkritisch von einem älteren Grundbestand an „Rudimentärsendschreiben“ — die im Kern dem klassischen Botenspruch gleichkommen — abgehoben. Bei diesen handelt es sich um voneinander unabhängige mündliche, eventuell auch bereits schriftliche, Verkündigungen an individuelle Einzelgestalten (*ἄγγελοι* als „spiritus rectores“ [111] in den Gemeinden mit Leitungsverantwortung), die sich großteils einer historischen Figur mit Namen Johannes verdanken und vermutlich von dessen Schülern nachträglich überarbeitet wurden. Mittels der nun hinzutretenden Botenformel werden sie auf dieser Redaktionsstufe mit der erweiterten Christusvision (Offb 1,4-20) verbunden und mutieren dadurch auch zu Gemeindeschreiben, wobei die *ἄγγελοι τῆς ἐκκλησίας* in „identitärer Reziprozität“ (87) nun auch die Gemeinden repräsentieren. Die Sendschreiben bleiben jedoch an individuelle Adressaten gerichtet. Das Erbe des vermutlich inzwischen verstorbenen Johannes soll auf diesem Weg bewahrt wie aktualisiert werden. Sein Schülerkreis gehört mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit zur johanneischen Schule — wodurch sich manche Nähe zum restlichen Corpus Johanneum erklärt — wie auch der eigentliche Apokalyptiker selbst „als Vertreter deutero- oder gar trito-johanneischen Denkens“ (372). Er setzt den finalen redaktionellen Schritt zum überlieferten Buch, indem er die Sendschreiben um Weckruf und Überwinderspruch ergänzt und auf diesem Weg die literarische Verbindung zum apokalyptischen Hauptteil schafft, der sich (weitere Quellen verwendend) seiner Feder verdankt.

Die Studie basiert auf der rigorosen Anwendung einer klassisch verstandenen Literarkritik, die formale, sprachliche sowie inhaltliche Unterschiede, Spannungen und Widersprüche zu einem Schichtenmodell der Textentstehung systematisiert. Die Beobachtungen werden dabei kumulativ kombiniert bzw. häufig ergibt sich bereits aus einer Beobachtung die literarkritische Sichtweise auf weitere Textphänomene.

Wie andere vor ihm lenkt W. den Lichtkegel maßgeblich auf das inhaltlich lose Verhältnis zwischen den Sendschreiben mit ihrer je eigenen Situation und dem vom Problem des Kaiserkultes dominierten apokalyptischen Hauptteil, das dem (deshalb älteren) Korpus der Sendschreiben nach W. fremd ist. Dieser etwas schroffen Gegenüberstellung kann man allerdings das Beispiel des Antipas (Offb 2,13) ebenso wie den zweifachen Vorwurf der *πορνεία* (Offb 2,14.20) entgegenhalten. Denn Antipas ist wohl bei den im apokalyptischen Hauptteil angesprochenen Märtyrern (Offb 6,9-11, vgl. 7,14) mitgemeint. Selbst wenn man zugesteht, dass sein Todesfall im Sendschreiben keinen expliziten Bezug zum Kaiserkult aufweist, kann man zugleich nicht übersehen, dass dies für die Märtyrer von Offb 6,9-12 sowie 7,14 strenggenommen auch gilt. Was nämlich mit dem Tier aus dem Abgrund (Offb 11,7) gemeint ist und um welchen Krieg es sich handeln wird, erfährt man letztlich erst in Offb 13,11-18. Der Konflikt um den Kaiserkult wird im Buch (stets in Symbolsprache gekleidet) erst schrittweise und mit Offenbarung 12 beginnend herausgestellt, denn selbst die (bis dort singuläre) Auflistung von Vorwürfen an die Menschen in Offb 9,20-21 bleibt allgemein und ohne expliziten oder sonst erkennbaren Bezug zum Kaiserkult. Wenn der postulierte Verfasser des eigenständigen apokalyptischen Hauptteiles seinen Leser*innen aber zumutet, erst im weiteren Verlauf des Buches zu erfahren, worin der Frevel der Menschen besteht, taugt ein Fehlen von expliziten Hinweisen auf den Kaiserkult in den Sendschreiben nicht als literarkritisches Kriterium, um sie vom Hauptteil des Buches loszulösen. Selbiges gilt für den Vorwurf der *πορνεία*, der im apokalyptischen Korpus als Synonym für Glaubensabfall steht und in Offb 2,14.20 daher durchaus dieselbe Bedeutung besitzen kann, die den Leser*innen erst im weiteren Verlauf erschlossen wird.

Das literarische Geschick des Verfassers der Johannesoffenbarung, mittels Signalwörtern, Motiven und Anspielungen ein dichtes Bezugsnetz über sein Werk zu spannen sowie dessen textpragmatisches Konzept, den Text in einem steigenden Gedankengang schrittweise zu entfalten, setzt W. einer rigorosen logischen Analyse aus, die darin Brüche und Spannungen erkennt und die Erstleser*innen zu überforderten Zeug*innen seiner Beobachtungen erklärt und als solche zur Rechtfertigung seiner literarkritischen Urteile dienen.

Auch für die literarkritische Scheidung innerhalb der Sendschreiben erweist sich die Bezugslosigkeit zwischen (älterem) Botenspruch und (späterem) Überwinderspruch als zentral. In dem Zusammenhang kommt allerdings auch W. nicht umhin zu konzedieren, dass z.B. der Überwinderspruch von Ephesus (Offb 2,7) wie von Pergamon (Offb 2,17) jeweils den Metaphernbereich von Essen und Speise benutzen, was mit der in beiden Sendschreiben kritisierten Gruppe der Nikolaiten und ihrem Vergehen im Bereich des Essens bestimmter Speisen offenkundig zusammenhängt. Für das Sendschreiben nach Ephesus behilft sich W. mit der etwas gekünstelten Unterscheidung zwischen literarischem Bezug — entstanden durch die sekundäre Beifügung des Überwinderspruches — und (für die Gemeinde) fehlendem situativen Bezug im älteren „Rudimentärsendschreiben“ (191), um das gewünschte diachrone Urteil einer „Spannung“ trotzdem behaupten zu können.

Im Sendschreiben nach Pergamon hingegen wird die erkennbare thematische Kontinuität zwischen dem Botenspruch, der vor dem Essen falscher Speisen und vor den (dies praktizierenden) Nikolaiten warnt, mit dem verborgenen Manna im

Überwinderspruch bestritten, weil in diesem das Verb *φαγεῖν* fehle. Die Rezipient*innen seien nach W. daher gar nicht in der Lage gewesen, die Relation wahrzunehmen, der Überwinderspruch aus diesem Grund zwingend sekundär (208). Abgesehen davon, dass man sich fragt, welche Bedeutung ein von W. vorgeschlagener allgemeiner und dann tatsächlich kaum verständlicher Verweis auf die Wüstenzeit Israels mittels himmlischem Manna gehabt haben sollte, versucht, nach W., der den Überwinderspruch anfügende Apokalyptiker dann überraschenderweise doch, „semantisch lose“ an das *φαγεῖν* εἰδωλόθυτα „anzuknüpfen“, freilich „ohne dabei jedoch die dem Corpus selbst inhärente Argumentationslogik aufgreifen oder gar eine direkte kontrastanaloge Relation kreieren zu wollen“ (211).

Das Beispiel zeigt exemplarisch die Art und Weise, wie W. Literarkritik anwendet und damit die Johannesoffenbarung überfordert. Es drängt sich die Frage auf, ob das literarkritische Instrumentarium nicht überstrapaziert wird, wenn W. beständig Spannungen und Widersprüche eher konstruiert als dass sie sich aus dem Text heraus nahelegen. Den Sendschreiben (wie dem Rest des Buches) wird die logische Stringenz eines argumentativen Textes abverlangt und deren besondere Eigenart, mit Metaphern und (damit auch mehrdeutigen) Assoziationsketten zu operieren, fälschlich ausgeblendet. Gerade apokalyptische Literatur — und so eben auch speziell ausgeprägt die Johannesoffenbarung — arbeitet jedoch durchgehend mit Bildern und Motiven, die Assoziationsketten anbieten, ohne sie weiter auszuformulieren. Diese Leseleistung wird den Rezipient*innen abverlangt, wobei sich häufig mehrere Möglichkeiten eröffnen oder Leerstellen bleiben. W. hingegen fordert an solchen Stellen explizite Formulierungen ein, um aufgrund von deren Fehlen die Kohärenz des Textes literarkritisch anzuzweifeln und einen diachronen Wachstumsprozess zu begründen. Auf diesem Weg konstruiert W. Spannungen und Widersprüche, die der Text selbst häufig gar nicht bietet.

Das diachrone Entstehungsmodell von W. stellt letztlich vor das grundsätzliche Problem, dass zur literarkritischen Scheidung einerseits ein möglichst tiefer Graben zwischen Sendschreiben und apokalyptischem Hauptteil herausgearbeitet wird, man andererseits jedoch keine überzeugende Antwort erhält, warum ein Autor inhaltlich gänzlich veraltete Textbausteine ohne Bezug zur aktuellen Lage der Gemeinden in sein Werk aufgenommen haben soll. Ebenso bleibt es literarkritisch und damit methodisch fragwürdig, dass die erkennbar gleiche Technik der Textvernetzung unterschiedlichen Autoren zugewiesen wird. Denn die Botenformel wird gegenüber den Rudimentärsendschreiben als sekundär eingestuft, weil sie, im Gegensatz zu diesen, deutliche Bezüge zur Christusvision am Beginn des Buches aufweist. Weckruf und Überwinderspruch werden mit dem Argument vom Korpus der Sendschreiben losgelöst, dass kein inhaltlicher bzw. motivlicher Bezug feststellbar sei, wohl jedoch mit dem neu geschaffenen apokalyptischen Hauptteil, wo besonders gegen Ende die Motive der Überwindersprüche erneut auftauchen. Es will aber schlecht einleuchten, dass dieselbe Technik motivlicher Vernetzung zwischen einzelnen Teilen des Buches sich nicht einer einzigen Hand und damit einem einheitlichen Konzept und Entstehungsvorgang verdankt.

W. setzt mit seiner ungemein detaillierten Studie die bereits von J. Wellhausen vertretene Hypothese einer eigenständigen Entstehung der Sendschreiben der Johannesoffenbarung erneut auf die exegetische Agenda. Auch wenn das

Gegenmodell, dass ein einziger Autor für Sendschreiben und apokalyptisches Korpus verantwortlich zeichnet, noch immer überzeugender erscheint, stößt die Studie doch auch die methodische Frage an. Ist eine literarkritische Methode, die rigoros nach Spannungen und Widersprüchen sucht und dabei dem Text eine streng logische Kohärenz sowie semantische Kongruenz abfordert für eine apokalyptisch geprägte Schrift adäquat einsetzbar?

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